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Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 25 September 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is my great honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Republic of Serbia and inform members about the positions held by my country on some important global issues, developments in and around Serbia and the efforts that Belgrade has made with a view to reaching a just solution to problems facing the country and its neighbourhood.

First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session for his excellent stewardship and organization of this debate and the leadership he has demonstrated in his high-level post. I wish him every success in the performance of his duties as President of the General Assembly. I assure him that he will enjoy the support of the Republic of Serbia in the discharge of his mandate. He can count on our assistance in bringing his ideas to fruition.

At the same time, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, former President of the General Assembly, on his courage and impeccable work in presiding over the Assembly for the past year and on the understanding he has demonstrated of the problems encountered all over the world. He represented Serbia in a dignified manner while being an impartial professional of high standing.

The Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to the United Nations and the activities and cooperation carried out within its framework. We remain true to the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes and principles enshrined therein. We will endeavour, to the extent of our ability, to make a contribution to their implementation.

We are also determined to participate in the new initiatives being taken within the United Nations. I welcome the well-chosen theme for this year's session. The post-2015 development agenda and the preparations to be made in order to define a future global development framework are important issues, and the General Assembly is the right forum in which to hold these discussions and, more important, come to agreement on them. I am confident that the current Assembly session will be successful in the consideration of the agenda items highlighted by its President, namely, the contribution of women, youth and civil society to the

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post-2015 development agenda and human rights and the rule of law in that agenda.

The deadline for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which the Republic of Serbia fully subscribes, is fast approaching, and the United Nations and today's world are at a crossroads. The process that has been initiated is an ambitious and complicated one. Even the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), entitled "The future we want", makes it incumbent upon us to take action.

I hope that the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals will be a success. The Republic of Serbia appreciates the opportunity given to it, as a member of the Group, to help in the drafting process aimed at establishing sustainable development goals. For our part, we will do our utmost to contribute to defining sustainable development goals in clear terms. We believe that the sustainable development goals should be global in nature but, at the same time, have the capacity to be implemented in all countries, as countries differ so much in their capacity, level of development, priorities and policies.

It goes without saying that, in identifying the sustainable development goals, priority should be accorded to energy efficiency, renewable resources and climate change. Key development goals should deal with sustainable economic development because, without it, it will be impossible to achieve social development, reduce hunger, poverty, unemployment and inequality, prevent further wage level disparities or protect the environment.

I expect that attention will also be focused on implementing a global mechanism to prevent economic shocks from developed countries from spilling over to developing countries and destabilizing international financial markets. As part of the process, voices from both "have" and "have-not" countries should be equally valued. Developing countries should highlight the problems, and developed countries should act as partners in resolving them.

As a new member of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2014 to 2016, the Republic of Serbia will participate in all Council activities related to the MDGs and setting the stage of the post-2015 development agenda. However, there can be no development — sustainable, unsustainable, economic or social — in war-torn areas.

Even today, at the outset of the twenty-first century, it is unfortunate that many war zones exist throughout the world. My country has participated in United Nations-led peacekeeping operations for decades. In many continents, memories of Serbia's contributions to peace efforts remain very much alive.

We will continue to apply lessons learned to find solutions to specific problems in the field and to improve our peacekeepers' response capacities in terms of the challenges they will face in carrying out their mandates and with a view to achieving maximum performance.

Serbian service and police personnel are engaged in multinational operations in the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia, Uganda, the Middle East and Somali waters and soon in Mali as well. They all serve as proper representatives of their country through actions in favour of peace.

We are prepared to increase, in the coming period, the size of our contribution and equipment in terms of national contingents and to make use of the available United Nations standby arrangements. In line with our policies based on Security Council resolutions, we will also promote the participation of our servicewomen in peace missions.

Serbia's engagement in United Nations missions and other multinational operations represents our firm contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. The Republic of Serbia has no ulterior motive behind sending its troops to other countries, other than to provide assistance. For that reason, we would like to see the personnel of the Serbian armed forces and the Ministry of the Interior welcomed and accepted both by the Governments of the friendly countries to which they are deployed and the local populations and that they would be seen as supportive partners, rather than as foreign troops and occupying forces.

When seconding its personnel to multinational operations, Serbia has no interest — military, political or economic — but to help a friend in need and show the other contingents contributing to the operation that our troops may be counted upon to help.

Apart from wars, there is another omnipresent global danger looming large over the core values of the

United Nations. That danger is terrorism, which poses a threat to fundamental human rights and creates an obstacle to business, thus undermining development as well.

As a State party to most international counter-terrorism conventions, the Republic of Serbia attaches great significance to international activities aimed at suppressing terrorism. And we are adapting our domestic legislation to stem the scourge. We unequivocally support the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and all of the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Serbia, as a victim of terrorist attacks that have even taken the lives of children — the most innocent segment of its population — understands well the need for regional and broader counter-terrorism cooperation. Because terrorism knows no boundaries, States Members of the United Nations must be ready to cooperate without compromise, prejudice, or limitations and without any exceptions or special cases allowing terrorist actions against one's own people under the pretext of so-called "freedom fighting".

In that context, it is of the utmost importance to make progress on the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Serbia strongly condemns terrorism in any shape or form, without regard to who the perpetrators may be, wherever such acts may be committed or for whatever purpose.

On the other hand, no one has the right, Serbia included, to limit itself to statements made in condemnation. Victims of terrorist acts worldwide, those injured in attacks or the families of victims have the right to demand that persons responsible for such acts be brought to justice and that any further recruitment of terrorists or financing of their organizations end.

The Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights and is striving to fully comply with the internationally recognized standards in that area. Serbia has taken a step forward regarding the enjoyment of human rights by minority groups, particularly national minorities, women and children and persons with special needs.

Serbia's law on the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities surpasses international conventions in many aspects. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia unambiguously prohibits the assimilation of national minorities and the undertaking of measures designed to artificially alter the ethnic structure of populations in areas where national minorities traditionally reside in large numbers.

The Republic of Serbia is a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural country. Dozens of ethnic groups and several religious communities live there peacefully, and its tradition of living side by side based on tolerance and respect of others has been long, genuine and deep-rooted. Drawing upon our own experience, we have wholeheartedly embraced the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. We have actively promoted intercultural and interfaith dialogue in all domains and at all levels, as that is the best way to overcome divisions caused by cultural, linguistic, religious or any other diversity.

Generally, in the period under review, Serbia has achieved considerable progress in the protection of human rights, as noted in the presentation of the second universal periodic review, in Geneva in January, and during the visit to Belgrade by Ms. Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are ready to share our expertise and experience in the human rights field with our friends around the world. The Republic of Serbia considers such cooperation a friendly exchange, not interference in the internal affairs of other countries or as one-sided and irresponsible preaching and tutelage accompanied by conditions or blackmail.

The Republic of Serbia is a party to nearly all international instruments and initiatives in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. It fully complies with the obligations it has undertaken. Serbia's commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty, which we recently signed, is based on the belief that the establishment of legally binding international standards in that field is a significant contribution to eliminating the illegal arms trade, fighting international terrorism and organized crime and promoting peace, security and stability — in other words, the alleviation of human suffering.

In accordance with its agreed commitments, my country has counted and inventoried all weapons in its possession and has made the information available. It has also allowed the inspection of its arsenals. Our partners know where each piece of Serbian weaponry is located. Nothing is kept secret. We have done so not only because we were bound to do so, but to show and prove that Serbia is truly committed to peace and cooperation with its neighbours.

Contributions to peace can also be made through disarmament. Never in its history has Serbia fought a war of aggression, and the weapons now in its possession are only meant for its defence. Furthermore, Serbia has never posed a threat to any country. It has never possessed weapons of mass destruction and has no intention of including weapons of mass destruction in its visible, quantifiable and verifiable arsenal.

We are aware that progress on disarmament and arms control hinges not only on us. Success is related to developments carried out on a wider political and strategic stage.

In the little more than one year since I took office, I have visited almost all of the countries with borders in common with Serbia. I have spoken with the leaders of all of the neighbouring countries, including at international events. In that manner, I wanted to convey the message that Serbia has opted for regional cooperation and working together with its neighbours to address the problems we share in common.

On behalf of Serbia, I have made symbolic gestures to effectively demonstrate that we wish to reconcile with the peoples living side by side with us. I am confident that those gestures will significantly contribute to reconciliation and help to right the wrongs of the past. We are now looking forward to the future. It is our desire to foster good relations with all neighbouring countries by building a network of roads, railway lines and bridges; to try to make our mark on the international market; to promote our energy systems; to protect the environment; to cooperate in disaster relief; to develop cross-border projects; to have trade links and; to expand our cultural, scientific, educational, technological and sports cooperation. Our common goal is to improve the living standards of everyone living in the countries of the region.

In comparison with our neighbours, we can compete only in terms of seeking to attain more human rights protection, whereas in all other respects, we will cooperate and help encourage one another to perform better. Serbia's message to its European partners is that the time for conflicts, distrust and disputes is now behind us. Our country is looking forward to the future and to becoming a member of the European Union. It has been decided, and we trust that Serbia will start negotiations with the European Union no later than January 2014. I hope that Serbia will be able to inform the next General Assembly session about the outcome of those talks, which we believe will not last long or continue indefinitely, as well as about Serbia's ongoing progress towards becoming a fully fledged member of the European Union. At the same time, Serbia has revived old alliances and forged new ones throughout the world, creating strategic partnerships with countries in the East, West, North and South.

Serbia has been active in all regional initiatives and organizations, and has recently chaired some of them, making a remarkable impression on other members. As a result, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has entrusted Serbia with its chairmanship for 2015. The OSCE chairmanship, to be held by Switzerland in 2014 and then by Serbia in 2015, serves as a good example of how to cooperate within international organizations. It will give Serbia an opportunity to make a constructive contribution to the enhancement of the OSCE, especially since 2015 will mark the fortieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, one of the most important OSCE instruments. We are confident that our activities on regional initiatives and our forthcoming chairmanship of the OSCE will make Serbia an ideal candidate for taking on greater responsibility within the United Nations system, consequently making it possible for it to be entrusted with even more responsibilities and duties, when the time comes.

The unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, in 2008, has been creating problems and undermining a system established by the United Nations at its start. The United Nations has never recognized an illegal secession attempt by Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-governance, but a number of countries, irrespective of the norms of international law, have recognized Kosovo as an independent State. Under constant pressure and through blackmail on the part of large and powerful States, some other countries, including Serbia's traditional allies, have unfortunately recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Serbia has responded to such acts in a measured, diplomatic and political manner, refraining from any use of force, to safeguard its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. Faced with a situation where its vital national interests were at stake, a country would rarely demonstrate such a degree of level-headedness.

We are convinced that such problems, including the status of Kosovo and Metohija, should be resolved peacefully. For that reason, we take heed of calls by the General Assembly in 2010 to start negotiations with representatives of the authorities in Pristina. Following

the efforts of Lady Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, we have made arrangements with the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia has thus shown that its intention was to protect the Serb community in Kosovo and Metohija as far as possible, to ensure that all its inhabitants in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo could also lead normal lives on a day-to-day basis.

Let us underscore that Belgrade and Pristina have only reached agreement over clearly defined matters, such as local elections and the establishment of a community of Serbian boroughs in Kosovo and Metohija, and that the Republic of Serbia has not recognized the independence of Kosovo in any shape or form. The first agreement, which we promised to respect fully, does not mean in any way that the Republic of Serbia intends to approve Kosovo's entry into the United Nations and other international organizations, where membership is the sole prerogative of sovereign States.

The United Nations has been present in Kosovo and Metohija for more than 14 years. We believe in the United Nations, which was entrusted with administering this part of Serbia in 1999. Therefore, we ask that the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) remain unchanged, that its staff not be downsized and that its activities be reinforced. UNMIK plays an indispensable role. It should coordinate the work of all international forces present in Kosovo and Metohija within a neutral framework, as stated in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). That resolution defined the tasks of the United Nations and reaffirmed that Kosovo and Metohija is a province forming an integral part of the Republic of Serbia.

We also support the work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We request that the European Union respect its own principles as far as the province of Kosovo and Metohija is concerned. We expect EULEX, by maintaining a neutral approach, to continue assisting in the development of democratic institutions within the province and in monitoring the human rights of Serbs and other non-Albanians, since only their fundamental human rights are under threat.

As far as Serbia is concerned, there is yet another pending task before the United Nations weighing on the conscience of its Member States, one which must not remain unaddressed, so that neither we nor future Presidents have to seek justice by repeating that a crime remains to be resolved. We wish to recall that special rapporteur Dick Marty, a Swiss senator, has shown, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has confirmed, that some Albanian leaders in Kosovo and Metohija organized the kidnapping and killing of Serbs whose organs were then harvested and sold illegally. We were not in a position to initiate legal proceedings for those crimes, which were committed towards the beginning of the twenty-first century, crimes that have so far not occurred anywhere else in the world. We still believe that it is necessary for the United Nations to be included in investigating those crimes, based on a report by the Council of Europe. Serbia appeals for the support of friends in its efforts to shed light on the truth behind those and other crimes so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

In April, I spoke before the Assembly in the thematic debate on the role of the international criminal justice system in reconciliation and about the work of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (ICTY). We said then that the ICTY had abused the mandate given to it by the Security Council: that it had not helped the reconciliation process in the territory of the former Yugoslavia; that it had compromised the idea behind the international criminal justice system; that it had acted under political pressure; that it was not independent; that it had acted differently in similar circumstances; that it had acquitted some war criminals, in some instances even failing to indict them; that it had humiliated Serb victims of the secession wars of the former Yugoslavia; and that it had attempted to paint a revisionist picture of history. We continue to hold the same points of view.

By accepting the integrity of the Tribunal, we have not only earned the right to criticize its work but also to propose a solution. Nevertheless, while its intention was not just to criticize this institution, Serbia suggested certain measures that might, to some extent, help redress the wrongdoings of the Tribunal. We request the United Nations and the ICTY to find a legal solution that ensures that Serb convicts are sent to serve their prison sentence in Serbia, so that justice may be done more effectively, primarily as a way of helping them reintegrate into society. That does not mean that we challenge the verdicts reached or that we are minimizing the crimes committed by those persons. We simply want to help those concerned return to normal life, once they come out of prison, as part of the Serbian community.

Serbia respects every State Member of the United Nations and offers each and every one of them its friendship and trust. We expect that to be reciprocated in equal measure. The Serbia of today and tomorrow deserves to be trusted.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Deby Itno (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. John Ashe, his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the work they have carried out since the previous session.

The theme of this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is very much at the heart of our concerns. The 2015 deadline we have set for ourselves will soon be upon us. The general impression is that a number of countries continue to fall short in terms of funding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), official development assistance and debt relief. It is unfortunate to note that all of the commitments made to boost economies and development efforts have not achieved the expected results, despite major international mobilization.

There is a strong possibility that the 2015 deadline will fall well short of many countries' expectations, especially in Africa — since poverty persists, despite the development and implementation of national poverty eradication strategies. That is why — drawing on lessons learned from the shortfalls in setting and implementing the MDGs — the African continent intends to establish a post-2015 development agenda that is capable of meeting its expectations and it calls upon the international community to support it.

On top of the development challenges come other security challenges. New hotspots and wars are emerging all over the continent. Coupled with that, the terrorism phenomenon has taken a heavy toll, as was the case earlier in Mali and now in Kenya.

Terrorism is a scourge that knows no borders. It feeds off of the blood of the poor, spreading its recruitment tools of ignorance, poverty and fanaticism. No good can ever come from violence carried out against peaceful populations while using supposed religious considerations or doctrines as a pretext. Such violence is totally contrary to the principles of international law, in terms of human rights and the right to freedom of religion and opinion. Our profound belief is that the fight against terrorism must continue to the last breath, in order to curb proliferation and eradicate it definitively.

Chad, for its part, has made its strategic choice. It has decided to make its modest contribution to the establishment of peace, security and stability wherever necessary. That fundamental position is the key motivation of its candidature for non-permanent membership in the Security Council for the period 2014-2015. To that end, my country expects friendly, active and enthusiastic support from the Assembly, to encourage its valiant people to continue to provide their utmost effort in supporting the cause of international peace and security, which are indispensible to establishing a world based on stability, development and democracy.

Since restoring its stability, Chad has remained mindful of all crisis situations in Africa and in the world. It intends to fully cooperate with the United Nations on all positive initiatives aimed at peace and security, wherever the need may arise.

My country provided a clear indication of its unshakeable resolve through efforts with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) in the eastern part of Chad, from 2008 to 2010 protecting Sudanese refugees from Darfur and Chadian internally displaced persons and ensuring the security of humanitarian personnel and associated United Nations personnel.

True to its philosophy, Chad sent the largest armed contingent to Mali, with more than 2,000 men, and 900 to the Central African Republic. Some 1,800 Chadian soldiers will join the new United Nations force in Mali. Chadian peacekeepers are now present in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti as part of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

We take this solemn opportunity to formally commend the successful completion of the transition process in Mali, with the holding of free, regular democratic elections unanimously hailed by the entire international community. Our wish is for that fraternal country to restore peace, unity and stability so that its sons and daughters can focus their energies and intelligence on progress and the well-being of the population.

However, the situation in the Central African Republic remains alarming. The insecurity and the political, economic and financial difficulties that continue to face the transitional Government represent major challenges of concern to everyone. The countries of the region, through the Economic Community of Central African States, have made their utmost effort to mobilize military, financial and human resources to support peace and security in that country.

I wish to welcome the establishment of the Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine, of which the Central Africa Multinational Force comprises the core. Its troop level will increase from 2,000 to 3,600, thanks to the participation of Central African States and other friendly countries that have shown an interest in joining that noble cause. In spite of all those efforts, we must recognize that the needs on the ground clearly highlight the need for swift intervention, admittedly in the spirit of regional solidarity but also with the vital support of the international community. To that end, we expect the Security Council to adopt a firm resolution that provides for logistical and financial support modalities for the mission.

Turning to the Sudan, as the Assembly knows, we signed a peace accord on 15 January 2010 and established a joint force that has allowed us to stabilize our common borders. As a result, my country will continue to actively strive for peace in the Sudan, as a member of the follow-up committee for the Darfur Peace Agreement.

Nevertheless, I think it would be timely to draw the attention of the Assembly to the humanitarian situation in Darfur as a result of the new hotbeds of tension that are emerging and which lead to a constant flow of other refugees and internally displaced persons towards eastern Chad. Currently, there are more than 400,000 refugees and 200,000 internally displaced persons, compared to 290,000 and 180,000 in past years. All efforts made since the outbreak of that crisis to foster the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their regions of origin have been in vain thus far. It is our duty to advocate from this rostrum for the energetic pursuit of assistance from the international community to all those people as political and ethnic tensions continue to divert them from their path to return.

Chad condemns the rampant instability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the Government and the members of the rebellion to reach a negotiated solution to their dispute to allow that great African country to focus on its development.

Our profound belief is that the solution to all the crises I have just listed cannot be military. A lasting, definitive solution to the ills that are hobbling the development of Africa requires a constant struggle against poverty, marginalization and youth unemployment. It also requires the establishment of constructive dialogue among the various sectors of a country, on the one hand, and permanent dialogue among different cultures and religions, on the other.

Addressing the situation outside Africa, I must first mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which persists and for which the international community has not yet found the appropriate solutions. We urge and encourage the efforts made by the Organization and the United States Government to conclude a peace agreement that allows for the peaceful coexistence of two sovereign States.

The situation in Syria troubles us all since it has reached a particularly grave stage. We have no right to allow a whole people to be cast adrift. The use of chemical weapons, which marks a dramatic escalation of the civil war in that country, is an affront to the human conscience and to the ideals present at the birth of the Organization. While welcoming the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, my country wants to see the perpetrators of those crimes identified and brought to an international tribunal.

However, we are greatly saddened to see Syria tear itself apart and Syrians killing each other. The international community must do its utmost to stop that tragedy.

Allow me to turn to Cuba. The embargo against Cuba, which has been in place for decades, unjustly penalizes that country. We call for the lifting of the embargo in order to allow the country to resume the place it deserves in the comity of nations.

At the national level, Chad, which has definitively turned the painful page of wars and divisions, is now fully devoted to its development by exploiting its mineral and energy resources through daring strategies. To do that, it has just adopted a national development plan that will soon be the subject of a round table on its funding and implementation. At the political level, we give pride of place to dialogue. We have established a permanent political dialogue framework that brings together the majority and the opposition and has the power, inter alia, to create structures for the organization of future elections. With the assistance of Chad's partners, in particular the United Nations, we have taken all the necessary steps to prevent and put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate a major concern for my country. It is our ardent wish to finally see the long-awaited reform in the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. That reform, which has become an issue of justice and equity, is a top priority for Africa. Keeping Africa, as well as other key actors on the international scene, outside that universal forum appears shocking today to hundreds of millions of human beings throughout the world. The awakening of the peoples of Africa, the role of the continent in the world and its indispensable contribution to preventing and settling conflict means that our continent can no longer be sidelined from the prestigious institution that is the Security Council.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Chad for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: Thirteen years ago, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established humanitarian principles for the twenty-first century. Together, Member States and international organizations stood for the idea that the world's poorest nations and poorest people should not have to live without dignity and hope.

The world is a different place now. We have witnessed the struggles of a global economy reeling from a financial crisis and, indeed, a recession. But we have seen a billion people lifted out of poverty, more children in schools, greater care for the sick. And we have observed a generation born in a new age of information, ready to embrace ever-expanding frontiers of technology.

But the transformative effect is not yet complete. The list of shortcomings is as long as that of the successes, and as we think about the theme of "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", we must have the courage to go beyond business as usual. The report of the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, has laid out an ambitious vision for the future, and I congratulate the eminent persons who worked to produce it.

But together we must now take an honest look at the MDGs, determine what worked and what did not, and commit to forging a new global partnership founded on mutual responsibility and trust. That will require developing nations to take greater ownership of the post-2015 agenda. One of the failings of aid has been the lack of attention to country-specific context in agreements. So now is the time for the developing world to make its voice heard in order to shape the debate and ensure that policies and programmes are demand-driven.

It will also require Governments to empower those whose lives we are trying to transform, to give them a

stake in the process and a say in their countries' progress. In Rwanda, we have found that empowering local leaders while demanding accountability is an effective catalyst of development. But for decentralization to work, the centre must remain stable. That is why we continue to place such emphasis on good governance. It has inspired trust in our institutions and been a foundation for our development. We know it is the best way to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

There must also be a far greater focus on the role of the private sector and recognition of its power to create prosperity. For that, we need a global environment without trade barriers and one that facilitates investment in infrastructure. Greater investment is particularly needed in roads, railways and airports in order to connect domestic markets to regional and global ones. Investment is also needed in energy. Electricity, something taken so much for granted in the developed world, is still a luxury for far too many people and businesses. Access to knowledge, information and technology will also play an important role. It is levelling the economic playing field for developing countries and is beginning to break the cycle of poverty.

Post-2015 presents an opportunity to turn that new sense of possibility into a reality, to give people in developing nations increased opportunity. In Rwanda we are on course to meet all the MDG targets, but for us they are the floor, not the ceiling. We remain tireless in our pursuit of progress, because we know all too well the cost of failure. Next April, Rwanda will commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the genocide. Over three long months, flickers of life went out all over the country, but today Rwandans are standing strong, having overcome adversity. In building a new nation, we have a purpose that is shaped by a tragic past but focused firmly on the future. And as within the larger African and world community we move towards the next chapter of global development, we must create strong and meaningful partnerships that have a positive impact on the lives of all. Together, we can make sure that the post-2015 era is defined by opportunity and optimism, prosperity and progress, dignity and hope.

On another issue of critical importance, Africans supported the global consensus against impunity and the creation of an international justice system to fight it. We did so on the understanding that such a system would promote peace and security within and between nations, and that it would uphold the principle of the equal sovereignty of nations. In practice, however, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has flouted those principles. It has shown an open bias against Africans. Instead of promoting justice and peace, it has undermined reconciliation efforts and helped to humiliate Africans and leaders, as well as serving the political interests of the powerful.

Nowhere have the shortcomings of the ICC been more evident than in the ongoing trial of Kenyan leaders. The people of Kenya have shown their eagerness to heal the wounds of their past, reconcile and move on. That is why they elected the current leaders who are on trial. Those efforts to reconcile their communities and move forward should be supported, and development of the national judicial capacity to fight impunity should be promoted rather than undermined.

The General Assembly and the Security Council should be examining this matter as well as the wider issues of universal jurisdiction that have already been brought before them. That is the least we can do to uphold the principles of justice and the equality of nations, support reconciliation processes and respect the dignity of Africans.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am privileged to once again address this Assembly.

I would like to take the opportunity to echo the sentiments conveyed by previous speakers in congratulating Ambassador John W. Ashe on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are indeed very proud to have a brother from the small island developing States presiding over this session. I am confident that under his able stewardship of the Assembly will continue its work towards improving security and quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular the most vulnerable. Let me also take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the leadership of his predecessor, Mr Vuk Jeremić.

I also commend the untiring commitment and work of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been an able navigator on this journey, steering the United Nations through the diverse and complex realities and the myriad challenges facing our peoples and nations. On behalf of the people of my country and our region, I wish to reiterate our deep gratitude for his personal commitment to the issue of climate change and the plight of the most vulnerable. Our people still remember with fondness the Secretary-General's visit to Kiribati in 2011, which was particularly significant in that it was the first visit to our country and region by the head of the United Nations. I am also heartened and humbled to hear that his visit brought home to him the stark realities of the challenges facing our people, living as we are on the front line of climate change.

As we gather again in New York for this session, the problems are perhaps greater today than they were a year ago. Security challenges posed by climate change, conflicts, terrorism, transnational organized crime and other threats continue to undermine our efforts to achieve sustainable development, peace and security for our global community. In the past few weeks, we have seen heartbreaking events unfold here in the United States, in Syria, in Pakistan, in Kenya and in other parts of the world, giving ample evidence of the growing security threats to our peoples from within our own societies. We commiserate and join in prayer with the families of all those affected by those barbaric and terrorist acts.

The ongoing work of the United Nations, and the work awaiting us at this session, reflect these challenges, and the President has appropriately selected the theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" for our discussions this week. Kiribati welcomes the theme. We believe that it provides an opportunity for us to reflect on what we have done and achieved as individuals, as leaders of our countries, and together as a global body entrusted with making the world a more peaceful, secure and better place for everyone. We must continue to ask ourselves if what we are doing is in the best interests of all our people, or of just a select few. We must examine our efforts as leaders of this global family and ask ourselves if we are doing the right thing for our children and their children, whose future rests in our hands and depends on our decisions.

This is the eighth time I have had the honour to address this Assembly in my ten years as President, and on each occasion I have sought to convey the same message. On each occasion, I have spoken of the real and existential threat to my nation posed by climate change and sea-level rise, and I have called for urgent action to ensure the long-term survival of countries like mine. Last year (see A/67/PV.11), I said that I would continue to speak of the peril confronting my country for as long as I have breath in my body.

Well, I am still breathing and the peril remains. It is a critical issue for the survival of our people and indeed for all of humankind. Many of us here today are parents, and even grandparents. I myself have 10 grandchildren. Surely the world that we want to leave to our grandchildren should be better than the one we inherited. But we are not on course to achieve that. In fact, we are disastrously off course. The scientists tell us — as I am sure they will again reaffirm in their next assessment report — that calamity awaits, and not just for those of us on low-lying islands. What we are experiencing now on these low-lying atoll islands is an early warning of what will happen further down the line. No one will be spared.

We cannot continue to abuse our planet in the same old way. To shape the future we want for our children and grandchildren, we need leadership, we need commitment, we need action — now. When we all return home to our children and grandchildren, we must be able to look them in the eye and tell them with confidence that we have done all that is humanly possible to combat the devastating consequences of climate change.

We are grateful to the General Assembly for acknowledging that climate change is a matter that

warrants the attention of the Security Council. I applaud the commitment of our Secretary-General to that specific security threat and particularly welcome his recent announcement to convene a high-level climate summit at approximately this time next year. It will be the most significant such event since the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009.

But the Secretary-General cannot mobilize the remedy needed on his own. He will need the support of all nations to ensure that the action necessary to address climate change is taken. We must step up our national and collective efforts to mitigate global greenhouse gas emissions. We must urge major greenhouse gas emitters to do their part. We must also call with urgency on our development partners to assist in our efforts to deal with the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise now being experienced in our countries, and in our efforts to prepare our people for an uncertain future.

The delivery of international adaptation finance and resources is taking much too long. We cannot continue to stand on the sidelines and wait for others to deliver. In Kiribati, we are taking charge of our situation and moving forward with our mitigation and adaptation strategies. We have finalized a national adaptation framework and are now working directly with our partners on it. Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and the World Bank are working with us to implement our national adaptation priorities.

While we are taking adaptation measures to ensure that Kiribati remains habitable for as long as possible, prudence demands that we prepare for the future of our people. We are looking to improve the skills of our people to a level where they are able to exercise the option of migrating, to be able to migrate with dignity.

When it comes to the Millennium Development Goals, our situation has not changed much since I last spoke before this body. We are on track on some of the Goals, but we continue to be off track on most. This, I believe, should not come as a surprise, as most of the limited resources we have continue to be diverted from equally pressing priorities to fighting the onslaught of the rising seas and storm surges and their impact on our water supplies, homes, livelihoods and public infrastructure. This is a costly exercise, one we cannot afford but that is necessary. We will continue to rely on the support and goodwill of our partners and members of our global family in that regard.

As we prepare for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in 2014, the special needs of the most vulnerable low-lying small States, like Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Maldives and Tuvalu, must be highlighted, for how can we meaningfully discuss sustainable development goals when a disproportionate amount of our time and scarce resources are focused on ensuring the survival of our people?

For us, the ocean is a double-edged sword. Sea-level rise threatens the very survival of our people. But the ocean is also an integral part of our lives and provides daily subsistence for our people. It can and should be a ticket to freedom from dependency on others. We are a nation of water. We own substantial fishery resources. The annual total catch in our waters is valued at some $400 million. Yet as owners, we receive only 8 per cent of that sum. Where is the equity, where is the justice in this?

We believe that this must change. Our objective must be to maximize the returns from those resources, and we have started in that direction with the establishment of our first fish-processing plant through a public-private partnership. We invite our partners to join us in that endeavour. I am convinced that, given the right support, we can achieve sustainable development by utilizing the available resources of our vast exclusive economic zone. Through this approach, we can reduce our reliance on external assistance. I believe that if we are provided with the support we now need to develop our capacity to harvest and process our own resources, we will also be better able to build our climate-change resilience.

The ocean is the next frontier in the pursuit of sustainable development. While we have failed to protect our land and atmosphere from our human demands, we must make sure that the ocean does not meet with the same fate.

In June last year, we met in Rio de Janeiro to review our progress 20 years on from the 1992 Earth Summit. Unfortunately, our track record in delivering on our undertakings has not been good. In fact, in many respects, our environment is worse off today than it was 21 years ago.We renewed our commitment in Rio to achieving the future we want, but we need to move beyond commitments and to act. The future we want will require this Organization to restructure and realign itself to reflect the realities of our time: a time in which

new and emerging security threats, such as climate change, climate variability, sea-level rise and ocean acidification, are challenging the international system of governance; a time in which the future survival of some nations is seriously in question; a time when all those countries with the ability to do so must contribute to the prevention of this calamity or be forever judged by history.

Business as usual can no longer be considered an option. Let us not limit ourselves to working within the boundaries of our comfort zones. Let us be inclusive rather than exclusive. We must listen to civil society, our youth and women's groups and allow those with the ability to make a contribution to join in the global dialogue and action to address these major challenges.

In that regard, we welcome the continued resolve of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly to accelerate action on the reform of our Organization, to ensure the highest level of global collaboration, accountability and decisive action, and to inspire a greater sense of urgency on issues of critical concern to our global community.

We also welcome the inclusion of Taiwan in the international processes of the World Health Assembly. We hope that a similar inclusive approach will prevail in respect of other international institutions and processes, so that Taiwan, and others currently excluded, can participate and contribute meaningfully for the good of humankind.

Resolution 66/288 calls for a frank assessment of our global decision-making structure. It requires bold but rational political commitment on a global scale. As leaders of our global family, we must be brutally honest in accepting the fact that unless we act now to shape the future we want for our children and their children's children, the prospects for success will be bleak. As we chart the path towards the future we want, we must address the fundamental threats to the security and very existence of the members of this family of nations. Once again I call on all of us to ask ourselves the question, "Whose interests are we pursuing? Are we here to secure the future of each other's children or just our own?" This is the greatest moral challenge facing us today.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Komorowski (*spoke in Polish; English text provided the delegation*): First of all, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. John Ashe for his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

In one month's time, it will have been 70 years since the Foreign Ministers of the four major Powers agreed to set up a universal organization dedicated to ensuring international peace and security. In Moscow, in 1943, high representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, China and the United Kingdom took that decision in the very midst of the most devastating war in human history. They knew that maintaining peace and the creed of "war no more" required harmonious and concerted international cooperation. They knew that it required collaboration among the great Powers and respect for the principles of international law, as well as the building of infrastructure for peace. The declaration published back then rightly spoke of the need to act for justice among nations. That is important, because it is from injustice or from the sense of a lack of justice that many conflicts, both internal and international, have originated and continue to originate.

On the eve of that anniversary, it is worth examining to what extent the international community copes with threats to peace and with open-ended, prolonged disputes. The Organization and its States Members are right to be satisfied with the body of work produced since then to help maintain security and peace. The

United Nations has proven to be an instrument that, since the Second World War, has made international relations more civilized in very many areas, not just in relations among countries but also within them. Understandably, the world is still far from ideal, but we should not lose heart. A better world is possible, and we should not lose sight of that. That is the real ideal outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, and it is a duty that belongs to all of us, the Members of the Organization.

The justified satisfaction with the progress made, which was ensured with the aid of the United Nations and enjoyed by the whole of humankind, cannot hide the weaknesses of the Organization and its ineffectiveness in situations it was set up to resolve.

One such current situation is the civil war in Syria. That conflict has led to a large number of victims and has created a major humanitarian crisis. It is a threat to regional security and stability. In such situations, Members of the Organization are authorized to demand efficient action by the Security Council. That is a justified expectation of ours based on Article 24 of the Charter. Regrettably, we must conclude that in the Syrian dispute, members of the Security Council have spoken out for individual sides in the war and supported them in various ways, rather than make the parties stop fighting and commit to peace talks. That has revealed the lack of capacity and efficiency of the decision-making mechanisms of the United Nations.

Thisis all the more reason not to procrastinate or wait for another anniversary as a pretext to return to our efforts to reform the Security Council in a way that would also bolster its authority, legitimacy, representativeness and effectiveness. We are talking about a more systemic solution that would not limit the Security Council but would go beyond the Council by reinforcing its representativeness. We are thinking today about the significance of the original principle of the right to veto of the Security Council's permanent members, in the light not just of current or future challenges but also of the changes in the global international order, which are unfolding before our very eyes. It would be beneficial if the discussion about those issues could follow a formula similar to the one that proved successful prior to the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, which brought about a rather ambitious reform agenda for the Organization, some of which found its way into the World Summit Outcome adopted by Member States in 2005 (resolution 60/1). Poland was an active participant in that work and intends to continue its engagement for further necessary reforms.

The Syrian tragedy, including the use of chemical weapons, is symbolic of a broader phenomenon — the ignoring of international values, norms and obligations adopted by the Organization and the entire international community. After all, they should apply to everybody to the same degree, with no one set outside or above them. Too often, the immediate national interests of countries have the upper hand. That leads to tragic consequences in terms of human rights and humanitarian issues, including the principle of the responsibility to protect, for which we had such high hopes when it was adopted in 2005.

Armed conflicts are an extreme manifestation of the mass violation of human rights. The tragic development of the situation in Syria, which has claimed more than 100,000 victims by now, could have been prevented, especially if the Security Council had adopted the necessary decisions early enough. Therefore, the solution of the difficult, complex and interrelated problems of the Middle East entails a comprehensive, imaginative and impartial approach.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In a context where everyone is focused on security issues — including new, non-traditional ones, and where the dominant concerns are the economy, crisis mitigation, the fight for growth and competitiveness, competition for markets and land that could provide valuable raw materials for economic development — we cannot forget about human rights. Recently, many actors in the international arena have failed to care about them. But is it possible for us to ignore them, when, for instance, the violations are too close to genocide?

Let me remind the Assembly that this year, on 9 December, we will be celebrating the sixty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was, by the way, initiated and drafted by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. The message from his research and initiatives, which started in Warsaw in the early 1930s, is as follows: we must be alert and sensitive to the symptoms of future violations of human rights; it is our duty to respond to them and not just show moral outrage.

As the effectiveness of the response depends on international cooperation, the United Nations is to be

a centre for such international cooperation. The United Nations is the best, and often the only, such centre. We must not allow the instruments for the protection of human rights developed by the United Nations to be eroded. Their effectiveness will depend upon whether we remain united, and not just in name. It is necessary to establish a mechanism that would, in an objective and uncontroversial manner, force harmonious cooperation between the permanent members of the Security Council in the face of situations that fall under the principle of the responsibility to protect, in order to ensure that the prevention of such crimes and the effective response to them prevail over individual geopolitical interests.

The practice of exploiting children in armed conflicts is particularly saddening and causes a lot of outcry. The fact that many Governments tolerate such practices and that the Organization, despite existing conventions and protocols, is unable to do more in this area is unacceptable. Let me remind the Assembly that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was also developed on Poland's initiative. For children, their safety, development and rights, it is the family that matters most. Looking at the family and its role in society makes us aware of how much the family means when it comes to respecting human rights. We are particularly sensitive to that in Poland.

What in many countries is a tangible but slight deficit in the exercise of economic and social rights, while in many others it is poverty and chronic underdevelopment. Poverty and underdevelopment are not just human rights issues and factors that undermine the dignity of the individual and entire social groups. They are also the reason that individuals and nations are unable to ensure survival on their own, or to fulfil their creative potential for their own benefit and that of humankind. That is why international efforts aimed at helping regions and countries that suffer poverty and are constantly underdeveloped are so important for them to be able to take the path of sustainable growth and stop being chronically dependent upon external assistance. First and foremost, however, that is necessary so that fundamental human rights are respected and local residents regain their sense of dignity in order for their inherent potential to serve the development and enrich the diversity of the human civilization.

Those objectives will be served by the climate negotiations that Poland is going to chair when the nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change takes place in November.

We know in Poland that just one single generation can be enough to make unbelievable progress. When communism fell in 1989, Poland was a poor country, economically ruined and badly indebted. It needed international aid, not in the form of non-repayable borrowing but debt relief and restructuring, technical and training assistance, access to markets of better developed countries and foreign investment.

Coupled with the hard-working nature and entrepreneurial spirit of the Poles, that has all borne fruit in abundance. Since then, our gross domestic product has increased by approximately 400 per cent, while our emissions have dropped by more than 30 per cent, as compared with the baseline year. That attests to the fact that it is possible and realistic to achieve economic growth while curbing the growth of harmful emissions.

Obviously, we are aware that there is no single formula for everyone and no single path to sustainable growth. There are different baseline circumstances, environments and cultural and geographical conditions. The Polish example, however, and that of other post-Communist countries, should be considered in other regions of the globe.

The same is true for the European development model of the European Union, which strives to combine democracy and human freedom, economic competitiveness, social justice and solidarity. It is not about being Eurocentric. It is an experience most appreciated by those who come to Europe from the furthest parts of the world and want to stay there. Do not be misled by the economic crisis in the European Union, which most countries in the Union are already beginning to overcome. The European development model remains universally attractive.

Our experience also suggests that even the most generous foreign assistance will not replace efforts made internally by a country. It is frequently an indispensable precondition, yet is insufficient in itself. Internal efforts and factors — the freedom and empowerment of individuals, economic freedom and the stability of the State — always form the foundation.

Good governance is another important aspect of successfully pursuing sustainable growth, as it combines democracy, self-government, human rights,

competence, a lack of corruption and the primacy of the interest of the country as a whole over particular interests, whether they are political or economic. The entire notion of good governance is spelled out in a resolution of the Human Rights Commission initiated by Poland in the late 1990s. Only with good governance in place can international aid bring about desirable results in combating poverty and taking the route of sustainable growth.

Poland is an active participant in the international community, and not just through its bilateral relations and membership regional organizations such as the European Union, or supra-regional ones such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We are also trying to create a better international order by being active in the United Nations. Poland, an unflinching believer in the purposes and principles of the United Nations, is convinced that it is necessary to respect the treaties and commitments made by the Organization — by us — and supports institutions and programmes that facilitate their implementation.

For years, one of the priorities of our policy has been the promotion of human rights and democracy. Poland currently holds the presidency of the Human Rights Council. The European Endowment for Democracy was established on Poland's initiative as well. Our country's share in development aid is growing, particularly within the European Union. Next November, Warsaw will host the climate summit, where we will preside over the most important development process, namely, that of climate-related negotiations.

Poland has always been active in efforts aimed at ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical weapons. Drawing on our experience and rich relations with other countries, we wish to continue to contribute to reinforcing international peace and security. That is why we are seeking a seat on the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. We believe that as a member of the Security Council, we will be able to help achieve the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as well as represent the interests of Member States in line with the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati: It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to join my fellow Heads of State and Government at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We wish to offer our profound congratulations and support to the President of the Assembly. We also wish to express the Kingdom's sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his entire staff for their efforts and the role they continue to play in improving the working mechanisms of the United Nations and for being such a good host.

The United Nations has brought hope to those who are suffering, which is one of the pillars of its Charter. The fundamental purpose of the United Nations is to promote tolerance among humankind so that nations can live together in peace with one another. We are pleased that the United Nations has always worked hard to promote and maintain international security, and it has further taken positive action to prevent and remove threats to the peace that humankind so desires. We are also cognizant of the fact that humankind is facing a test of unprecedented proportions in hotspots that continue to pose a huge challenge for the United Nations to address.

We have been deeply saddened by the senseless killing of innocent people that took place this week in Nairobi. We condemn such acts of terrorism in the strongest terms. We send words of comfort to the Government and the families who lost loved ones through that tragic and senseless violence. The world needs to stand together and wipe terrorism from the

face of the universe. We call upon those who support such activities to cease from doing so forthwith.

We are also extremely disturbed by the deadly conflicts in countries such as Syria, where innocent people including women and children, are dying on both sides, with some displaced now living as refugees in other countries. We encourage all of the people of Syria to immediately cease fire and use dialogue as a means of solving their differences, because using the barrel of a gun to settle a score will not help them; instead, it will leave the Syrian people divided and not seeing eye to eye. Infrastructure and social services will be destroyed, leaving increased problems that will have devastating effects for a very long time to come. We trust they will soon find a peaceful resolution to their crisis.

The findings of the United Nations mission on the use of chemical weapons in Syria should be used as a basis to chart a way forward in pursuit of the dismantling of these unconventional weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to humankind. As long as chemical weapons continue to exist in that country, it remains at risk of similar attacks, where nobody will own up to them. Therefore, it is only proper that the dismantling process begin with immediate effect to prevent a similar attack in the future.

It is important that whatever action takes place in Syria, it must fall within the mandate of the United Nations. The United Nations must act quickly on those issues and take a leading role in making sure that those episodes where life is lost through the use of such weapons are prevented.

It is important for leaders and Governments to maintain contact and be in constant consultation with their people at all times to avoid situations where leaders do not understand the aspirations of their people. It is imperative to create forums where people will have access to Government to express themselves, because a lack of such communication and detachment leads to either Governments or the people reacting in a violent manner towards the other.

The domino effect of such situations can lead to an international crisis, as the problems of one country can easily spiral into problems for others, which may need to intervene. Such strife causes countries, as well as the United Nations, to divert resources from the objectives of socioeconomic development and channel them towards financing conflict situations instead of the welfare of the people.

The Kingdom of eSwatini is committed to a process of consultation with the people at the People's Parliament — Sibaya — and other dialogue forums. That practice is democratic and participatory in that everybody is involved in key decision-making processes.

Before I came to attend the General Assembly, the Kingdom of eSwatini held a very successful and peaceful election, which proved to be one of the most successful we have had over the years. Some 40 per cent of the Swaziland population were eligible to vote, and 70 per cent of them registered to do so in the elections. The primary and secondary elections were also very peaceful, free and fair, without any undue influence.

In the past, there had been only one day of voting, but this year we had to extend voting for two days during the primary and secondary elections. Our elections embrace our traditions and culture, whereby people from communities nominate people in their chiefdoms to compete at constituency level, which we call Tinkhundla. The winners then go straight to Parliament as a direct representation.

As a result, the people are happy to be part of the Government formulation process, because they can claim ownership of the people who constitute the Government of the day. It is in that vein that we trust that the new parliamentarians will work very well with the people in shaping the future of the Kingdom of eSwatini, with a view to meeting their aspirations and attaining the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

We also note with interest the increased number of observers in this year's election. Regional and international observers were highly impressed with our elections. We therefore call upon the world to embrace our system.

We are aware of the fact that many countries do not understand how our system of government works. We are happy to define our system as a monarchial democracy. Monarchial democracy is defined as a marriage between the monarchy and the ballot box. The ballot box represents the will of the people. The people provide advice and counsel to the King, and that ensures transparency and accountability. It is a combination of power and empowerment. It means that

the monarchy of eSwatini guarantees the continuity of stability, and the democracy of eSwatini guarantees the shared power of the people.

Therefore, the monarchy is married to the trust of the people, who believe that the King does everything in their best interests. It is home-grown; it easily accords with the norms and values of the Swazis and is therefore easily understood by all Swazis.

To those who proclaim that democracy is the answer to all nations and their development, we present ourselves as testimony of a new democratic ideology that works. It has a place in modern-day democracy, and it complies with all structures of the United Nations family. The Kingdom of eSwatini is committed to the ideals of the United Nations just as much as it is dedicated to protecting its history, its legacy and its dignity, while at the same time embracing the opportunities and possibilities for cooperation within the community of nations.

It is therefore the Kingdom of eSwatini's position that it believes in democracy as an idea, but not as an ideal, because things that are ideal to some may not be ideal to others. The Kingdom of eSwatini will, however, continue to embrace the opportunities, the technologies and the mechanisms that create a modern society.

Our ultimate goal is to have achieved first-world status by 2022, or at least visible signs that we are heading in that direction socially, economically and otherwise. In the past five years, significant progress has been made in the Kingdom towards poverty eradication, improving the health of our people, and infrastructure and agricultural development. We are confident that we will see much more progress in the next few years.

The kingdom of eSwatini has been implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which became effective in 2000 and most of which have a target date of 2015. Good progress has been made in the areas of education, gender, the empowerment of women and malaria control. Although the country has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the other Millennium Goals, there is still a need to accelerate efforts to address the issues of poverty, HIV and AIDS, infant mortality and maternal health.

In order to solicit views on the post-2015 development agenda, the Kingdom of eSwatini embarked on an intensive consultative process. It involved a cross-spectrum of stakeholders, including traditional leaders, young people, women, men, the business community, people with disabilities, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations and different regiments.

On the goal of eradicating poverty, the nation agreed that poverty was still a challenge and that greater efforts were needed to address it. The poor performance of the economy in recent years due to the global financial crisis has contributed to the situation, and therefore a great deal still needs to be done in that regard.

As to providing quality education and lifelong learning, the country has made significant progress towards achieving universal primary education. However, there is a need to focus, with the support of the private sector, on the quality of education and to introduce more vocational skills.

The Government has invested significantly in the health sector. However, the burden of disease continues to exist; hence that goal remains very relevant for the people of eSwatini. The country is still faced with the problem of HIV/AIDS, and therefore, in the post-2015 development agenda, the pressure to address the scourge as well as other, non-communicable diseases should be maintained.

Ensuring food security and good nutrition remains a priority and should feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda. However, the issue of climate change continues to be a drawback to many of our developing countries. Our food production has been seriously affected by climate-change patterns and the related challenges.

The provision of adequate financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and technical assistance to developing countries are critical if we are to achieve our global objectives. We therefore appeal to our developed partners to honour the pledges they have made to the Green Fund and the sustainable development programme as a matter of priority. We strongly believe that this could add the required impetus in the context of our objective of increasing food production.

The goal of achieving universal access to water and sanitation is also important for the people of eSwatini, since water is a very basic requirement for agricultural and industrial production, as well as for domestic use. Remarkable progress has been made in the area of supplying potable water to households; coverage has reached 71 per cent nationally.

The creation of jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth is critical for the development of any country and is linked to the goal of ending poverty. Emphasis should be put on value addition, technology transfer and the development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly for young people. As a country, Swaziland is fully behind the post-2015 agenda, because it remains a guideline for the international community in working together for the sustainable development of our respective countries.

The issue of the reform of the Security Council remains a top priority for the African continent. We are calling for a Council that will give equal opportunities to all regions of the world to voice their opinions as an international family on issues regarding global conflict. We believe our proposal is just and fair so that as a region Africa can have a voice in the affairs of the Council as equal partners in this global Organization.

The United Nations should continue to play its advocacy role to ensure humankind continues to live peacefully with each other. All nations around the world should be given equal opportunities to share their expertise and experiences with the Organization.

The Kingdom of eSwatini is happy to note that, with solid international support and cross-Strait developments, the Republic of China on Taiwan has increased its meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms. We will continue to encourage positive interaction in the international arena between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Finally, I hope that this session will come up with the desired results and tangible targets. We also look forward to a post-2015 agenda that will create a conducive landscape for all humankind to live in.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: It is a great honour to once again represent my beloved nation at this rostrum. During the past decade, when I have had the privilege to address the Hall, Georgia has moved from a failed State to a market democracy. We have experienced both advances and setbacks, both breakthroughs and mistakes. But the world has been able to witness my nation's constant commitment to freedom. I ask members today once again to hear the voice of a nation that transcends political, social and religious differences in a common love for freedom — a voice that, despite all the problems we have encountered and the challenges we still have to overcome, is full of hope. Looking at our world today, I think that this voice of hope is needed.

The optimism of the early 1990s, when the spread of liberal and democratic values seemed natural, when the end of history had been proclaimed, and when the United Nations was set to become the heart and the soul of a world finally at peace, the optimism of that era — noticeable when I was a student in New York and visited the United Nations as an intern — was then crushed by a wave of pessimism and cynicism.

The world is not at peace. Humankind has not reconciled with itself, and the United Nations did not become the heart and soul of a united globe. Western civilization, once triumphant, is now trying to tackle a deep economic, social, and spiritual crisis. In Eastern Europe the colour revolutions are challenged by the very forces they defeated a few years ago. In the Middle East the glorious images of cheering crowds in Cairo and Tunis have been replaced by the horrendous videos of the gassed children of Damascus.

There are many good reasons to be disillusioned. But should the untrammelled optimism of the 1990s be replaced by an equally untrammelled pessimism, by a sense of resignation that stifles hope? Should the fact that the expansion of democracy and freedom turns out to require profound struggle cause us to renounce our beliefs and our principles?

I have come here today to share the hopes on behalf of my nation and to speak out on behalf of my Georgian people against such pervasive fatalism. I came here to address those who doubt, those who hesitate and those who are tempted to give in.

If the West is an anachronism, why do millions of Poles, Czechs, Estonians, Romanians and others cherish so much the day they entered NATO? Why are millions of Ukrainians, Georgians, Moldovans and others desperately knocking on the doors of the European Union?

If freedom is no longer fashionable, how do we explain that the suicide of a previously unknown citizen in a remote Tunisian town has changed the map of the world? No, history did not come to an end in 1989 or 1991, as was proclaimed, and it never will. Freedom is still its driving force and its goal. Everywhere, men and women who want to live in freedom are confronted by the forces of tyranny. The question is: are we going to be actors or spectators in that confrontation?

As I speak, the Eastern European countries aspiring to join the European family of free and democratic nations are facing constant pressures and threats. Armenia has been cornered and forced to sign a customs union that is not in that nation's interest or in those of our region. Moldova is being blockaded. Ukraine is under constant attack. Azerbaijan faces extraordinary pressure. And Georgia is occupied. Why? Because an old empire is trying to reclaim its bygone borders. "Borders" is actually not the right word, since that empire — be it the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, or the Eurasian Union — never had borders. It had only margins.

I came today to speak in the name of those margins. Unlike most nations, the Russian Federation has no interest in having stable States around it. Neighbouring countries in constant turmoil is what the Kremlin is seeking. It rejects the very idea of strong Governments in Georgia, Ukraine or Moldova, even ones that try to be friendly to its interests. I was never a great fan of what the French call "la langue de bois". But, as my second term nears its end, I feel the urge more than heretofore to speak my mind. Let us be very concrete.

Do members think that Vladimir Putin wants Armenia to decisively triumph over Azerbaijan, for instance? No. That would make Armenia too strong and potentially too independent. Do members think then that the contrary is true, that Moscow wants Baku to prevail over Yerevan? Obviously not. The current rise of a modernized, dynamic Azerbaijan is a nightmare for Russian leaders. No, they do not want anyone to prevail. The conflict itself is their objective, since it keeps both nations dependent and blocks their integration into the European common space.

Do members think that the electoral defeat of the forces that led the Orange Revolution in Ukraine has led the Kremlin to take a softer approach to that country? On the contrary. I spoke yesterday to my colleague Viktor Yanukovych. His Government is under constant attack and pressure from Russia. That is what is happening on a daily basis, again ahead of the European summit in Vilnius. Russian officials now speak openly about dismembering that nation. I just heard the speech two days ago.

Do members think that the Kremlin would agree to discuss the de-occupation of our regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, now that the Government has changed in Tbilisi? Far from it. The annexation of Georgian lands by Russian troops continues. Yesterday, the occupants again expelled Georgian citizens from their houses and are destroying their villages, homes and the houses of their parents and grandparents. In daylight, they are taking over their cemeteries and water systems with total impunity.

Despite the friendly statements made by the new Georgian Government in recent weeks and months, the Russian military continues to advance its position, dividing communities with new barbed wire, threatening our economy, moving towards the vital Baku-Supsa pipeline, approaching closer and closer to the main highway of Georgia, and thus putting into question the very sustainability of our country.

We are one of very few nations in history — of which I am very proud — that has, unfortunately, sustained a full-blown attack by Russia. We are the only one, in many centuries, whose statehood and independence have survived, despite a full-blown attack by the more than 100,000-strong Russian army, despite being bombed by 200 planes and attacked by the full Russian Black Sea fleet and tens of thousands of mercenaries. Our statehood and independence have survived despite all of those things. But let us not now risk losing any of that in a time of peace. We have survived because were united; we survived because the world was with us. I hope that the world will remain with us when that pressure is on us.

I have come here, in the name of the Georgian people, to ask the international community to react strongly to the aggression and to help us to put an end to the Russian annexation of our lands. The hostility of Vladimir Putin and his team towards the Government that I have had the privilege to lead for almost a decade has not been based on personal hatred or cultural misunderstanding. Any such interpretation was just a smokescreen.

My predecessor, President Shevardnadze, came from the highest-level Soviet nomenklatura. He was returned to power in Georgia with direct Russian help in the 1990s, through a military coup. He was well known for his Soviet diplomatic skills — unlike me. And yet, Russia constantly undermined his authority and even tried to assassinate him several times.

It is not about Gamsakhurdia — the first President of Georgia — Shevardnadze, Saakashvili, or the present Prime Minister Ivanishvili. Those names actually do not matter when the stakes are so high. This is about the possibility — or lack — of true statehood in Georgia and beyond. Why? Because the current Russian authorities know perfectly well that as soon as strong institutions are built in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova or in any other place — as soon as functioning States emerge — such institutions, such States will reflect and enforce the will of their people, which is to become fully independent and move towards Europe.

The Georgian experience of successful reforms and the creation of a functioning State was therefore considered to be a virus — one that could and would contaminate the whole post-Soviet region. We became the least corrupt country in Europe, the world's number-one reformer — according to the World Bank — one of the top places for business and the least criminal country in Europe, after having been one of the most criminal. That was the virus that should be eliminated by every means possible.

That is why the Georgian nation has suffered an embargo, a war, an invasion and an occupation — all since 2006. But it is also why the resistance of the Georgian people and the resilience of the Georgian democracy are of the utmost importance for the whole region.

The efforts to roll back the advances of the European Union and of NATO in our region — progress based on the will of our people — are becoming ever more intense. Those efforts have a name: the Eurasian Union. It makes me sick when KGB officer Vladimir Putin lectures the world about freedom, values and democracy. That is the least of the things he can do for the world, as the dictatorial leader of one of the last empires left. But that new project is much more dangerous than his lectures. The Eurasian Union has been shaped as an alternative to the European Union, and unveiled by Vladimir Putin as the main project of his new presidency — a new Russian empire.

Because European and Euro-Atlantic integration take a lot of time and require tremendous effort; because there are moments when one might think one is pursuing a mirage; and because the threats are becoming so strong, the pressure so direct, while the promises seem so far away — some people in our region might fall victim to fatigue and ask themselves, "Why not?". Today, I want precisely to explore that "why not?".

Much more than with a choice of foreign policy or of international alliances, our nations are confronted with a choice of society, a choice of life. Our people have to decide whether they accept to live in a world of fear and crime: a world in which differences are perceived as threats and minorities as punching bags; a world in which opponents are faced with selective justice or beatings; a world that we in our region all know very well, as do those in some other regions of the world, since this is the world from which we originate.

The Eurasian Union is both our recent past and the future shaped for us by some ex-KGB officers in Moscow. On the opposite side, our revived traditions and our centuries-old aspirations have led us towards another world called Europe.

European societies are far from perfect — we all know that. There too, one can have fears, doubts, angers, hatreds and social inequality. But there, at the same time, meritocracy prevails over nepotism, tolerance is a fundamental of public life and current opponents are the future ministers, and not prisoners to be or enemies to beat.

The choice, when it is expressed in that way, is so obvious for the people of our region that some Kremlin strategists — they call themselves "polito-technologists" — have decided to cancel the truth and have shaped lies that they are spreading throughout Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and many other places. Their mouthpieces in our respective countries — that conscious or unconscious so-called

fifth column — identify the European Union with the destruction of family values, the erosion of national traditions and the promotion of gays and lesbians, undermining our traditional religions.

Strangely, in recent years, and even more so in recent months, we hear in Tbilisi, Kiev and Chisinau the same ugly music that was first orchestrated in Moscow. We hear that our traditions are collapsing under the influence of the West, that Christian holidays will be replaced by gay pride events and churches by a multicultural Disneyland. We hear that our Orthodox identity is under threat. And after all of that, we hear that we share with our former masters a common respect for decency and traditions.

Are we so naive as to believe the lies of Putin and the others, as other generations have done, allowing our sovereignty to be kidnapped? Are we so unfair to our ancestors to think that their memory would be honoured by attacks on mosques or by pogroms? Are we so unaware of our own history that we allow it to repeat itself endlessly?

When we hear the fake music of the orthodox brotherhood sung by Russian imperialists, can we not hear the true voice of Patriarch Kirion, who was assassinated, or the eternal voice of the Patriarch Ambrosi Khelaya, who was tortured for days and weeks only because he appealed to the Geneva Conference against the invasion of his country? He told his Russian interrogators, "You can have my body, my flesh, but you will never have my soul." Are we so deaf as not to hear the voices of the bishops and priests tortured and killed by Russian imperialists and Russian communists? Are we so uneducated that we do not recall who has repainted our churches and erased our sacred frescos? Are we so blind today not to see the destruction of our churches by the same people who erased our churches in the nineteenth century — Russians who are now in the occupied territory?

We need to know our history. Our history teaches us that tolerance is the basis for sovereignty in our region. It is not only a moral duty; it is an issue of national security. We need to know our history to understand that the same old imperialistic principle — divide and rule — is being applied today as it was two centuries ago.

Looking at our region today, those who have some knowledge of Caucasian history might remember the Armenian-Azerbaijani bloodshed of 1905, directly created by the tsarist Administration; compare it to the beginning of the conflict in Karabakh in the late 1980s. The Russian army was present there, in large numbers. In front of its eyes, the war started and they pretended to help both sides, but in fact stirred up the conflict.

They might recall — as I do too well — the beginning of the war in the Georgia region of Abkhazia in the early 1990s, when Georgian paramilitary groups were getting their weapons from the same Russian troops who were actually leading, directing and assisting the Abkhaz militia and bombing Georgian territory and bringing in Chechen mercenaries in order to kill any form of solidarity between nations of the North and the South Caucasus. They did so just as they sent — for the same reason, more than one century before — Georgian officers to the front line of their wars against the Chechens, Ingush and Dagestanis.

We could also look at other margins throughout the times. We could look at Poland or Ukraine, and we would see the same pictures. Everywhere it reached, the Empire inflamed the relations between subjugated peoples and separated them by a wall of fanatic antagonism. Unfortunately, it used to work. But what is even more unfortunate is that it is still working today.

The European Union, the greatest political success of recent decades, has been built on three pillars, which could be characterized as three rejections — the rejection of the extreme nationalists who had led Europe to the collective suicide of two world wars and the horrors of nazism; the rejection of communism, which was threatening to be spread throughout the continent and the world; and, finally, the rejection of colonialism and imperialism. It took time — and many participants today, as victims of French imperialism or British imperialism, remember it well and painfully — for the French and British Empires to accept that third rejection. But giving up their colonies was the price they had to pay for the modernization of their economies and the development of their democracies. It was also the price to pay for European unification to become fully realized.

The Eurasian Union is based on the exact opposite premise. It is fuelled by intolerance, it is lead by old structures of the KGB, and it is designed to revive an old empire. That is what the Eurasian Union is all about. Of course, joining the Eurasian Union is very easy. There are no social, economic or political criteria to be met; becoming a colony, in fact, requires no effort at all.

Passivity, mediocrity, the absence of national pride and a willingness to be enslaved are the only requirements.

On the other hand, to form a real union there is no alternative but to make a herculean effort and meet exact criteria, because principles are precisely what create a union. To those who doubt, therefore, I say that it is precisely because the European Union demands effort and imposes criteria for joining — because the European Union does not seek to absorb us while the Eurasian Union dreams of absorption — that the choice should be obvious.

But there is an even better reason for saying that the choice is obvious. The choice is obvious because the Russian project is doomed to fail. No empire is sustainable today; we are living in the twenty-first century. It is certainly not the Russian century, and the Russian Empire is the last, anachronistic empire in the world. If we look back at history, France and the United Kingdom lost their colonies not only because the colonies fought for their independence, but also because people in Paris and London ultimately did not believe in their empire anymore.

Exactly the same thing is happening in Russia nowadays. The imperial dream is being rejected first, as we have seen, at its margins. But, most crucially, perhaps, the idea of the Empire is rejected at its very centre. Such a rejection does not manifest itself in public protests alone or in the rising polls of the opposition in the main cities of Russia. It expresses itself in the universal cynicism of Russian elites towards Putin's Eurasian vision. The very people who are supposed to serve it do not believe in the viability of the project.

Rejected at its margins, rejected at its centre, the imperialistic path will come to a dead end, the Eurasian Union will fail, and Russia will in the end become a nation State with borders, instead of margins — a real country with real borders. Then it will start to seek stable relations with stable neighbours. Then cooperation will replace confrontation.

It will happen, and much sooner than people think, to the benefit of the margins, but most of all to the benefit of the Russian people themselves.

It will happen because the imperial project has become absurd for a generation of Russian citizens who are among the world's most enthusiastic users of the Internet.

It will happen because ethnic discrimination in Russia is being used in its territories, but it will not make Russia a stronger and more united State.

It will happen because the endless resources provided by the revenues of oil and gas are challenged by the perspectives offered by the exploitation of shale gas and shale oil. The shale gas revolution is really undermining the last authoritarian empire in the world.

It will happen because gas alone does not replace economic modernization.

It will happen because of corruption and the absence of justice.

It will happen because entire regions have been alienated by discrimination and violence — because the people of Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and many other places have been so persecuted that they do not feel part of any common project with the central authorities in Moscow.

It will happen because the frustrations, angers and hatreds are too strong to bear and the unifying ideal is too absent.

It will happen, not in the coming decades but in the coming years. A few years from now, the Assembly will recall my words. Vladimir Putin will have left the Kremlin and vanished from Russian politics, even if he says that he will be there for another 20 years or more. Russian citizens will remember him as a ghost from the old times — from the times of corruption and oppression.

Nobody knows whether the process will be calm or violent, whether his successor will be nationalistic or liberal, or both together, but what matters is something else — Russia will no longer be an empire. It will become, finally, a normal nation State. That is the horizon we should all prepare for together.

Meanwhile, as our region remains an area of confrontation, the formerly captive nations should unite their strengths instead of cultivating their divisions. Some leaders and some countries in the past understood that the freedom of one was dependent on the freedom of all the other subjugated nations, like Poland, which for many centuries dreamed of uniting all persecuted people, or like the Poland of Marshal Pilsudski, which invited all the oppressed people or their officers to unite under the flag of Polish independence and Polish military forces. But never did

our ancestors benefitefrom a force that was vast and powerful enough, that understood its strategic interest was to preserve the sovereignty of each of our nations. Today that force exists; it is, with all its deficiencies, the European Union.

As we come closer to the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit, I would like to reiterate a call that I have made several times in the recent years. By launching the Eastern Partnership as a response to the 2008 invasion of Georgia, the European Union has offered to our nations a platform for us to cooperate under its benevolent umbrella. We should invest much more in it. We should develop common projects, first and foremost focusing on the necessary reforms that we should carry out together, because reforms mean for all of us statehood and independence.

Russian Empress Catherine II knew it well. When Poland started to successfully implement an ambitious programme of reforms based on precepts from the French and British Enlightenments despite Russian attempts to counter those reforms, she wrote a long and secret letter to the German Emperor, Frederick the Great of Prussia. The letter was and remains one of the most impressive expressions of the nature and strategy of the imperialistic project. It states that the ongoing reforms were dangerous for both Russia and Prussia because they would turn Poland into a true State, that the reforms needed to be stopped and that Poland should be attacked and dismembered before reforms were fully implemented so that it never needed to be occupied again.

The letter will not sound unfamiliar to those who know how much Vladimir Putin loathed the Georgian experience during the past decade. Many Russians were asking, if the once-corrupt Georgia, a criminal country, a mafia-ridden country, considered to be a failed country, could succeed, why is it that Russia cannot succeed? It was an ideologically dangerous project. For the first time, an efficient nation State was being built in the Caucasus, and the reforms had to be crushed before they could bear all their fruits.

Unity should be our rule in Eastern Europe, including in the divided Caucasus. I have spoken about the beginnings of the war in Abkhazia. I could have recalled an older scene that symbolically characterizes the history of the Caucasus. It was at the end of the rebellion led by Shamil, the great imam of the Northern Caucasus, against the Russian Empire, after Shamil had surrendered and after the last Chechen leader still fighting, Baysongour, had been wounded and captured. As Baysongour was going to be hanged, the Russian officers brought together a crowd of Dagestani men to witness the execution. They ordered one of them to remove the chair on which Baysongour was standing in order to execute him. The Russians knew what they were doing — they hoped to fuel the local vendettas and oppose the people, which is an old tradition in the Caucasus. Seeing that, the valiant commander Baysongour moved the chair himself, committing a suicide forbidden under all religions, including Islam, and preserving the relations between neighbours.

Despite that one failure, how many times has the strategy of dividing neighbours encountered success among the nations of the Caucasus? It needs to come to an end. That is why I have launched several projects during my presidency to reinforce the people-to-people contacts between North and South Caucasus, projects focusing mostly on education and on university exchange. That is why the Georgian Parliament has recognized the genocide of the Cherkezian people — one of the least known and tragic pages of the history of the world, when an entire nation was wiped because their land was needed by the Russian Empire.

We need to build on those efforts. We need to prepare for the time when the Empire collapses, so that its legacy of hatred is swiftly overcome. And we, as citizens of Georgia, need to prepare for the time when Russian troops will leave our occupied regions, when Moscow will withdraw from Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, Abkhazia. We need to prepare ourselves to welcome back our Ossetian and Abkhaz fellow citizens as brothers and sisters and not as enemies. We need to prepare for the time when hundreds of thousands, in fact, more than half a million, internally displaced Georgians and members of other ethnic groups return to their deserted homes, because that time will come much sooner than we think.

As my second term nears its end, I take pride in Georgia's many accomplishments during my tenure. We ushered Georgia out of a state of darkness, introduced unprecedented transparency into our public service, put our children back in school and got rid of the gangs. We have brought our nation closer than ever before to its European dream and worked tirelessly to renew the spirit of tolerance that guided Georgia in our glorious past.

We did many good things, but like any leader — and when I became President, I was then the youngest president in the world — I realize that some things were done at a very high cost because of lack of experience. In our rush to impose a new reality against the background of internal and external threats, we cut corners and certainly made mistakes. At times we went too far and at other times not far enough. I fully acknowledge my responsibility in that regard, and I sincerely feel for all those who believe that they did not benefit enough from our work, or even that they were victims of our radical methods.

I want to tell all Georgian citizens — those who supported our project, our policies and our party and those who rejected them — how proud I am of their maturity. We promised them this project, but we did not promise them that it would be smooth going. We were very ambitious, and that was because our people were so mature and so brave. I want to tell them from this rostrum how humble I feel in the light of the sacrifices and the efforts they made.

We are and should remain a nation united in a common love for freedom and dignity. We are and should remain a nation united in the deepest respect for the sacrifices made by our soldiers, a nation sharing the same sorrow when they lose their lives - in Afghanistan, for instance - and taking the same pride in their bravery. We are a nation that is proud of our soldiers, who stood up to a force of Russian invaders one hundred times the size of our contingent, and gave us and the world time to mobilize and to protect and save our independence — something that, with all due respect, many much bigger and more powerful nations could not do in the twentieth century. We are and we should remain a nation united in our historical identity and our desire to join the European family of democratic nations, the family we should never have been separated from in the first place, our family. The path of the Georgian people towards freedom, regional unity and European integration is far from over, and I will continue to dedicate every day of my life to its success, as a proud citizen of a proud nation.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I thank our outgoing President for his excellent leadership. Allow me also to extend my respect and gratitude to the Secretary-General for his untiring commitment to the mission and ideals of the United Nations.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the international community has supported the principle that the best form of development is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Since that time, however, production and consumption patterns have become increasingly unsustainable, driven primarily by a desire to develop economies at any cost. The Federated States of Micronesia has therefore proposed the following approach to global development beyond 2015.

First, any post-2015 development agenda must move beyond addressing basic human needs and focus on sustainable development. Secondly, in order to ensure that sustainable development is carried out in a dynamic and inclusive manner, the post-2015 development agenda must honour the environmental, economic and social pillars that make up sustainable development. Finally, international cooperation and assistance are crucial to fostering sustainable development globally. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have posed significant challenges. We continue to look to the international community for

assistance to overcome those challenges as we develop the sustainable development goals.

As this body considers a post-2015 development agenda, let us not forget one important point: development and the environment are inseparable. No country can develop its economy without degrading its natural environment to some significant degree. While society strives for economic progress, the natural environment that sustained our ancestors through thousands of years has come under attack.

Climate change is, without question, the gravest threat to my people's welfare, livelihood and general security. It is the survival issue of our time. Our sustainable development is threatened by the harmful effects of excessive greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, the effects of which poison our root crops, destroy our reef systems and drive many of our people from their ancestral homes. All of us, developed and developing countries alike, have a stake in finding ways that minimize man-made damage to Mother Earth.

Only the international community can effectively take up that cause. To that end, the comprehensive climate change treaty planned for adoption in 2015 must impose legally binding commitments. These commitments must reflect a level of ambition far higher than under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Pre-2020 mitigation action must also be ambitious enough to close the emissions gap.

I reiterate the hope that the world will address the dangerous growth of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by phasing down those chemicals under the Montreal Protocol. Micronesia was the first to submit an innovative proposal in this regard. We welcome the newly announced agreement between China and the United States to phase down HFCs. We also welcome similar developments around the globe. Achieving a phase-down of HFCs under the Protocol will build confidence and momentum for significant action on climate change in the future.

Another notable contribution is the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leaderhip, under which every Pacific Island Forum leader pledged to strengthen their country's efforts to fight climate change.

As we move towards the post-2015 development agenda, let us not lose sight of the enormous importance of the world's oceans. We call for the establishment of a sustainable development goal on healthy, productive and resilient oceans. In turn, we should expect a greater share of the benefits from the world's oceans. Let me stress the central role that the effective management of all fisheries must play in sustainable management. Bycatch and, particularly, discarded bycatch threaten effective fisheries management. This is a serious conservation problem, because valuable living resources are wasted. Moreover, it threatens our food security and nutrition needs.

Similarly, we agree that it is essential to include the goal of sustainable energy for all in the sustainable development goals that are under discussion here in New York. The transition to sustainable energy places a huge fiscal burden on our national accounts. I commend Tonga for spearheading the Pacific Regional Data Repository for Sustainable Energy for All.

The Federated States of Micronesia looks to the international community for economic cooperation and support. With limited resources, we have undertaken some bold initiatives.

First, we operate under a nationwide integrated disaster risk management and climate change policy that mainstreams climate change into our primary governmental and economic decision-making processes. This policy places special emphasis on strengthening the application of traditional knowledge of ancient conservation practices, which are threatened by sea-level rise, ocean acidification and other effects of excess global greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, our legislative branch recently ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. We will soon submit the instrument of ratification.

Secondly, we have taken significant steps in conserving our limited land and fragile marine ecosystems through the Micronesia Challenge. We have undertaken this Challenge because our nation is made of many small low-lying atolls. Our people are wise stewards of our land and sea, working with the environment to provide sustenance for us all. As the preamble to our Constitution says,

> "The seas bring us together, they do not separate us, our islands sustain us, our island nation enlarges us and makes us stronger... Our ancestors who made their homes on these islands displaced no other people. We, who remain, wish no other home than this."

Thirdly, we recently adopted a national policy that aims to ensure a sustainable energy supply and

an environmentally sound energy policy. Historically, Micronesia has imported all of its energy in the form of fossil fuels. We have begun to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. There are already a number of renewable energy projects up and running in many parts of my country, thanks to the assistance of our generous development partners. My country has adopted very ambitious targets in this regard.

In order to continue implementing our national development policies, we call on the major donor States to honour their official development assistance (ODA) target of seven tenths of a per cent of gross national income by 2015. We look forward to the discussion in the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. Technical assistance as a component of ODA is also crucial, particularly in the form of appropriate technology transfers and capacity-building initiatives.

Sustainable development must be supported by all of its pillars — not just economic and environmental concerns, but also social considerations. Our people are our most valuable assets. Therefore, we are tailoring an approach that is inclusive of all our people, with special attention to the circumstances of our women, youth, the elderly and disabled persons. Their advancement must be mainstreamed into our discussion on a post-2015 development agenda.

Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart and kidney diseases continue to be a challenge. We must address them through the sustainable development goals. This is a global crisis, demanding a global solution. If not controlled, it could undermine sustainable development and degrade the quality of life of our people.

We welcome the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development (A/68/PV.3) that took place two days ago. I was impressed by the achievements of the speakers and their inspirational leadership in this forum. We support the outcome document (resolution 68/3) of the High-level Meeting.

The Federated States of Micronesia places a high priority on the harnessing of advanced information and communication technologies for our socioeconomic development, especially in the areas of distance education, health, and natural disaster early warning. We thank the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for the assistance that they have offered to improve our telecommunications and to enable our country to obtain fibre optics. We also welcome cooperation and support from the International Telecommunication Union and our development partners.

Human trafficking continues to be a serious crime, affecting all nations and causing untold human misery and economic harm. My country is striving to protect its population from this scourge. We support the efforts of the United Nations to stop human trafficking, and we hope to implement the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking in all forms in Micronesia. The ongoing tragedy caused by human trafficking demands that it be prioritized and addressed by the entire international community.

The global development agenda will be shaped by the launching of the sustainable development goals in 2015. Many processes will influence the selection and monitoring of those goals, including the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which has now been replaced by the high-level political forum. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of the new forum, which will take on the monitoring of the implementation of sustainable development commitments. These are outlined in the Barbados Program of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288).

The second event that will shape the sustainable development agenda is the comprehensive climate change treaty, whose adoption is planned for 2015, and for which we support ambitious, binding commitments. Thirdly, preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, are now under way. Micronesia and other small island developing States recognize the international community's goodwill and renewed willingness to help our countries address our priorities and challenges.

Fourthly, I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for his vision and support of the wide range of issues so critical to small island developing States. His advocacy for next year's high-level summit on climate change and his focus on climate change themes will generate the political momentum for a post-2015 development agenda to guide all stakeholders.

We recognize the central role that reliable data plays in government planning and the crucial need for capacity-building, which must keep pace with the changing dynamics of basic governance in the

international landscape. The remoteness of our islands, limited national capacities, and the complex requirements of the United Nations make our development efforts even more difficult and expensive. We therefore look to the specialized United Nations agencies for urgent assistance.

Mr. Arias (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair

In closing, let me express my sympathy and solidarity with those people around the world who are facing immediate threats to their survival. I am horrified by the killing of innocents, especially women and children, in Syria and elsewhere. We in our peaceful islands condemn violence. But what can a small island nation in the Pacific do? What can any country, large or small, do? The answer, we believe, can be found only within our Organization. The world in which we live is too interdependent for us to stand aside while generations of internal conflict harden into unending hatred and bloodshed. We are all stakeholders. We must put an end to the senseless killings around the world. I call upon this Organization to employ its collective will to pursue the ideals of our Charter. I know in my heart that the goal is achievable. The future we want is enduring peace and prosperity for our world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.10

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 25 September 2013, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Arias (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Funes Cartagena (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to join other speakers in addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. This year the Assembly has as its theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". These annual meetings are thus an opportunity to consider and reflect on the course that each of our countries is following to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

There can be no doubt that recent events have posed a major challenge to the achievement of prosperity, development and progress, especially in those regions of the world that have suffered most from the effects of the international economic crisis and of climate change. El Salvador has been no exception.

When, on 1 June 2009, the Government that I head took power, the nation's economic growth rate was at negative 3 per cent, with 40,000 jobs lost. There had been a considerable drop in exports, especially to the United States, our principal market. Income from taxes and family remittances had decreased, and broad sectors of the population were impoverished or excluded from the benefits of public policies.

But that harsh reality was not just a product of the crisis. It was the result of decades of the implementation of economic and social models that excluded the great majority and promoted backwardness and injustice. As from June 2009, with the process of political alternation in El Salvador, that reality began to shift.

As soon as our Government took power, we made a commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to use them as a road map. The Government's five-year plan states that our strategic plan is to have a healthy, educated and productive population with the capacity and appropriate opportunities to fully develop its potential to become the foundation of our development. The Government's plan incorporates strategic instruments and policies aimed at achieving the MDGs over the short and medium term. We took the strategic decision not to shift the costs of the crisis onto the poorest segments of the population, as had been the habit in the past.

For that reason, we devised and implemented policies aimed at combating poverty, reducing

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inequality, achieving a process of social inclusion and creating new institutional mechanisms that would make it possible to more equitably distribute wealth and the benefits of economic growth.

Our Government put an end to the old concept of the patrimonial State, which defended only the interests of small political and economic groups. Now the Salvadoran State is at the service of the most underprivileged. That shift in public policy has translated into an increasingly modern and effective State that is fighting poverty, social exclusion, violence and corruption. Thus this new type of governance, which is based on the implementation of best practices, transparent and increasingly participatory, has already begun to have a positive impact on the achievement of the MDGs, as demonstrated by the following results.

El Salvador has made great progress towards eliminating poverty and hunger. In the past year, we not only achieved but exceeded the goal of reducing the number of households living in extreme poverty. We also made major achievements when it comes to access to education. In 1991, the net coverage for primary education was 75 per cent of the population; last year it was 93 per cent. We have gained almost 20 percentage points in those years.

Since the beginning of my Administration, all students in public schools — some 1.3 million children and young people — have received free shoes, uniforms and school supplies. The impact of this was immediately noticeable, as we increased enrolment while dramatically reducing the dropout rate. Twenty years ago, 85 per cent of the population of working age was literate, but this rate has now reached almost 100 per cent. Over for the past four years alone, the Government has managed to reduce the illiteracy rate by 5 per cent. With the help of thousands of volunteers, we are teaching over 170,000 adults to read.

In terms of health, one of the achievements we are most proud of is related to the significant reduction in maternal mortality, one of the two sections of Millennium Development Goal 5. With the health-care reform undertaken by my Administration, we have increased access to health services by hiring more doctors, nurses and specialists and establishing new women's centres. Pursuant to the Millennium Development Goals, the objective is to achieve a maternal mortality rate that is equal to or below 52.8 maternal deaths per 100,000 inhabitants by 2015. We have reached that goal in El Salvador and even exceeded expectations by reducing the rate to 41.9 maternal deaths per 100,000, or 11 fewer than the target for this Goal.

The comprehensive health-care reform initiative that we launched has been tasked with bringing health-care services to the most remote corners of our country that, historically, have been isolated from economic and social development. This firm commitment of our Government has led us to increase the health-care budget by 60 per cent over a period of four years. That has allowed us to increase the supply of medicines in hospitals and public health clinics by between 50 to 82 per cent in that time and to significantly expand the proportion of the population who are immunized. Similarly, free health consultations mandated by our Government have contributed to a 40 per cent increase in demand for such services, which represents a significant step in our goal to extend that service to the majority of the population.

I cannot speak of advances in health care without talking about access to and improvement of basic services such as drinking water. Our efforts have gradually borne fruit in the areas under our responsibility in this respect. We have met the target of 71 per cent of households having treated water piped into their houses. In 2011, under our Government, this was already true of 72 per cent of households. Sanitation is covered by another Millennium Development Goal, which set the target of 89 per cent of households having this service by 2015. As of two years ago, 96 per cent of Salvadoran households had access to sanitation.

In summary, great efforts have been undertaken to achieve the best possible outcome on each of the indicators, leading to enhanced well-being for all Salvadorans. I believe that the time has come to conceive of social programmes for people as an investment and not as an expense, or even worse as a waste, as some leaders in the country mistakenly continue to believe, stuck as they are in their stingy and outdated ways of thinking.

It is clear that the gains we have made in my country in recent years have not been the result of chance. El Salvador is going through a period of great change. This profound transformation has occurred first through a change in the economic model that has set a different course for our nation. We are working primarily on restoring the vitality of our countryside in order to make it once again a central engine for economic development.

Thanks to our family agriculture plan, which provides small and medium-sized farms with free delivery of improved seed packets and fertilizer, training and access to technology and credit, last year we had record food-crop harvests and were still able to keep the price of basic grains within reach of the entire population of El Salvador. We have also successfully implemented school lunch programmes, so that children receive at school fresh, healthy food grown on Salvadoran farms. Today, more than 800,000 poor Salvadoran children receive two glasses of fresh milk a week in school as part of their diet. All these efforts have brought more prosperity to Salvadorans, especially the poorest.

But in addition to poverty, there are other scourges such as violence, drug trafficking and organized crime that deprive our people of well-being and happiness. With this in mind, we have implemented public policies to reduce violence and fight crime.

The Government has created new police units, overseen the graduation of 4,000 new agents and redoubled operational plans to curb crime. At the same time, a non-aggression pact between the two main youth gangs was agreed on two years ago. The Government was only a facilitator of that pact, which has established the minimal conditions to reduce gang violence levels in the areas most affected by that phenomenon. Thus, ongoing crime suppression and prevention efforts have resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in homicides. The Government's security policy has also dealt a heavy blow to organized crime gangs, allowing for significant seizures of drug shipments.

We know, however, that huge challenges remain. There are major obstacles to development that will not be overcome in my new Administration's four years in power. I would highlight in particular the challenges represented by climate change and the resulting need to protect and safeguard the lives of tens of thousands of Salvadorans. We are a region exposed to extreme weather phenomena, at least five of which El Salvador has experienced in recent years. They have had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable parts of the population and the country's infrastructure, causing losses in the billions of dollars.

A major challenge is to build a sufficiently fair and democratic society that is respectful of those who make up the majority of the population — women. El Salvador has undertaken serious efforts to achieve goals derived from the Millennium Development Goals in the area of gender equality and the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women.

In addition to establishing a confidential call centre for reporting gender violence, the Government has approved the first national policy against human trafficking and achieved a considerable decrease in women's deaths by homicide. Without a doubt, the most valuable contribution in this area lies in the City of Women initiative, through which we have created four comprehensive care centres for women and are on track to create two more, scheduled to open later this year. This initiative is already considered by international organizations and world leaders a model of public management. It is a comprehensive and integrated system of specialized services for women in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, economic empowerment — through both formal employment and support for entrepreneurship — and prevention and treatment of gender-based violence. It also helps to focus the priorities and attention of my Government on women.

Another tangible demonstration of the ongoing process is the dialogue undertaken to achieve reparations for victims of gross violations of human rights and the vindication of the rights of war veterans. With regard to the latter, we have succeeded in repaying a debt that adminstrations prior to ours had failed for years to recognize and to repay. Moreover, my Government has promoted a reconciliation process without precedent in the nation's history and a recognition of the human rights atrocities committed in El Salvador. As Head of State, I asked forgiveness for the disappearances, murders and torture, and from all those who experienced the brunt of such abuses during our civil war. I ordered a dialogue with organizations representing the victims of serious human rights violations. As a result of this process, in the days to come I will announce a national reparations programme, which will include the ratification of various treaties human rights adopted by the General Assembly and a guarantee that such violations will never recur.

The right to food, education and welfare must be ensured in order to achieve sustainable development and eradicate poverty. In that respect, all the efforts of national Governments must be complemented and strengthened with the support of the international community and the United Nations system.

Radical change is needed in the global economic system, which is based on financial speculation

and consumerism and not only has an impact on the most developed economies of the world, but also and especially makes the least developed countries even poorer. International cooperation must seek fundamentally to improve the productive capacities of our countries and to invest in people suffering from poverty and exclusion. My Government believes that the path to growth is investment in the poor and their transformation into a middle class with access to health care and education.

I invoke international solidarity and the agenda of the General Assembly in which we are gathered here today in order to advocate once again for the lifting of the blockade against Cuba. I have made this same request in my previous statements before this forum, as I believe that Cuba is part of the American soul and that the blockade is a relic of the past. The brotherly people of Cuba, like all peoples of the world, have the right to seek development and well-being through comprehensive integration.

Similarly, we support diplomatic efforts seeking a swift peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria. We condemn the use of chemical weapons, and we support the agreement between Russia and the United States whereby Syria's chemical weapons would be destroyed under the supervision of the United Nations.

Before I conclude, I should like to express my firm belief that the United Nations will take the necessary steps to guarantee the development and implementation of a comprehensive post-2015 agenda. In that context, I believe that we will realize a better and fairer world for all of humankind.

In El Salvador, we are preparing to implement that agenda. We are happy to be among the few countries in Latin America working on multidimensional poverty measurement. Next year we hope to use these statistics to complement our income-based poverty measurement. We will thereby be in a better position to implement comprehensive policies that will allow us to eradicate poverty in a definitive and lasting way. I thank the United Nations for its invaluable cooperation in the pursuit of our major aspirations as a nation, and the Assembly for its attention.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Remengesau: At the outset, let me extend my congratulations and appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for his leadership and work with the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and to the Secretary-General for his continuing leadership.

The Palauan flag depicts a yellow full moon against a blue ocean. That combination of moon and ocean is a metaphor for nature's balance and harmony through the consistency of the rising and falling tides. Just before I left to come to the General Assembly, during a full moon high tide, my back yard, which nestles against the ocean, flooded. Typhoon Usagi passed through the Pacific just a few days later and landed in Asia, killing many people. It was followed almost immediately by Tropical Storm Pabuk.

When I was a child, my back yard did not flood and we did not have tropical storm after tropical storm pass through our Pacific islands. It is therefore as clear to me as it is to other Pacific leaders that the full moon and the ocean are no longer metaphors for balance and harmony. Today they represent imbalance from our past excesses and a lack of harmony due to our current inability, as the Secretary-General has so often said, to create the world we want.

The leaders and the people of the world certainly face many challenges moving forward in creating the world we want and in developing a sustainable future. In addressing the next round of sustainable development goals and in responding to the ever-growing challenges

of global warming, it is imperative that we all do a better job of working together to solve the serious issues that we face.

World leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio established a positive and rational vision of partnership and sustainable development for the world. Unfortunately, that vision seems to have been sidetracked. There is therefore frustration in many countries today related to our failure to move that vision forward, the slow pace in progress in meeting our joint goals, and the fear that those goals are being diluted.

Today, it appears that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has stalled, that the Kyoto Protocol is on life support, and that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development has not done enough to strengthen our three pillars of sustainable development. Our job as leaders is to reinvigorate our efforts by establishing real mitigation commitments and identifying immediate, sufficient and long-term implementation financing.

Together, we reaffirmed the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities at Rio and moved forward with the green economy approach to sustainable development issues. We must not allow our green economy to become business as usual. Rather, we must take concrete actions to make real our stated reaffirmation of the principles of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. Only then will our sustainable development goals discussed at this session of the Generally Assembly have a real chance to respond to our current worldwide environmental and developmental emergency.

It is clear that what is needed today is leadership — leadership from the developed world and leadership from the developing world; leadership that focuses beyond borders and looks farther than today's problems; ultimately, leadership that creates a broad consensus vision to preserve our planet for tomorrow's children. Such leadership must be based upon concrete and clear principles that will help guide all of our actions.

First, all nations, large and small, must accept direct and primary responsibility for global issues that threaten our planetary future, and must immediately take appropriate action. Secondly, we must protect the natural resources of all people and all nations, and recognize that no nation has the right to pollute the resources of another. Thirdly, we must recognize the need for the richer nations of the world to actively address actions that threaten the poorer nations of the world. Fourthly, we must protect human resources through governing strategies that focus on broad-based education, health, jobs and equal opportunities, and that acknowledge cultures, traditions and homelands. Finally, we must agree, in all matters, to promote and protect the human rights and peaceful existence of all the people of the world. Discussion, not weapons, is the best way to resolve differences and uphold human rights.

Let me interject here that as we witness so many areas of conflict on our planet, I think it is time for all of us, as leaders, to use this great institution and our own efforts to condemn violence against people, including the use of chemical weapons, for any reason, and to seek an end to armed conflict wherever we can. The events in Kenya are but one of a series of violent acts against people that we must work together to eliminate.

Our global warming doomsday is already set in stone if we fail to act. It is therefore our job as leaders to take all necessary action to eliminate the current threat. My country, along with other Pacific island nations, is unwilling even to discuss a 3°C-to-5°C temperature-increase scenario by the end of the century, for that will ensure our demise. We are also unwilling to discuss the issue of migration. Instead, we will continue to work with our developed partners to implement strong mitigation commitments and follow-through action to hold the line on that increase to a more realistic 1.5°C level.

My small Pacific country supports the concepts inherent in the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, issued at the Pacific Island Forum this year. The Declaration acknowledges the gross insufficiency of current efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. It also recognizes the necessity of ramping up climate change responses immediately and provides a platform for country leaders to establish new and realistic reduction commitments. As leaders, we must all respond to global warming in both the short and long term, from the top down and the bottom up, both pre-2020 and post-2020.

We should not forget, however, that the primary responsibility for reducing greenhouse gases still rests with our developed partners. We must therefore use the opportunity of the nineteenth session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

to be held in Warsaw, and thereafter, to support the technical work needed to fast-track the policies and technologies appropriate to accomplishing our goal; to revive the Kyoto Protocol or develop a more responsive alternative, and deliver and expand on commitments to reduce greenhouse gases; to phase out inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that distort world oil prices; and to arrive at a legally binding agreement to respond to and compensate for loss and damage associated with the impact of climate change in vulnerable countries.

Here at the United Nations in New York, we must deal with global warming security issues by appointing a special representative on climate and security to help expand our understanding of the security dimensions of climate change, and by establishing a joint task force, led by the Secretary-General, to assess and expand United Nations capacity to respond to the security implications of climate change. We must make 2014 the year of ambition. As host of the forty-fifth Pacific Islands Forum, Palau pledges to use that summit to build on the Majuro Declaration and to drive greater action. As leaders, we must also come to the Secretary-General's climate change summit next year ready to discuss the new mitigation actions we are prepared to take and the plans necessary to see that they are fully implemented.

My country is trying with all its might to embrace its leadership on issues of sustainable development. To date, Palau has committed to providing 20 per cent of its energy through renewable sources by 2020 and to reducing energy consumption through efficiency and conservation efforts. We have also declared and begun to implement the Micronesia Challenge, which commits the Micronesian region to effectively conserving at least 30 per cent of near-shore marine resources and 20 per cent of terrestrial resources by 2020. In that effort, Palau and other Micronesian jurisdictions have strengthened or established more than 150 protected and managed areas covering more than 680,000 hectares, leveraged more than $20 million in operational funds and inspired other efforts, such as the Caribbean Challenge, the Coral Triangle initiative and the Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge.

In addition, we have recently sponsored the creation of a Pacific Islands Forum invasive species advisory group to improve regional efforts to reduce the expansion of invasive species throughout the Pacific. Palau has also pioneered the planet's first shark sanctuary and, finally, recently engaged to pursue our most ambitious commitment to date — establishing the world's first comprehensive marine sanctuary, which will close Palau's exclusive economic zone to commercial fishing. We ask all the nations of the world to move in a similar direction, while recognizing their own unique circumstances, to help protect our planet's natural resources. An example of one simple action that would have a major impact on saving our shark population would be the prohibition of shark's fin soup. That is something that everyone in the world can clearly do without.

We are at a historic global moment. A year from now, the United Nations will launch the sustainable development goals, in a framework that will define the relationship between our peoples and our planet for generations to come. Through those goals, we must commit to a more sustainable use of the oceans. They cover two-thirds of the world's surface and connect 90 per cent of its population. A billion people are dependent on their fish. The oceans' health is undeniably linked to our culture, societies and economies. Yet in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the oceans received no mention. As the MDGs wind down in 2015, we need a new paradigm.

It is therefore time to enunciate our commitment to our oceans with a sustainable development goal that deals exclusively with them. Drawing from the lessons learned from the MDGs, we as leaders must create a goal that is resonant, measurable and easily communicated. Failure to do so will leave us naked before the shifting tides. In our sustainable development goals, we must also focus on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which cause two-thirds of the world's 57 million deaths annually. Within that context, we should also recognize that tobacco consumption, which was not included in the MDGs, has a direct impact on worsening NCDs and must therefore be separately targeted.

None of our leadership goals can be achieved without strong partnerships. Fortunately, Palau has been blessed over the last half-century with strong regional and international partners. I would first like to acknowledge the more than 50 years of support and leadership shown to us by the United States. We stand with the United States in its ongoing efforts to guide the international response to the horrific actions in Syria. We are also grateful for its very generous economic support over the years, and for being a reliable ally on which we can depend. We look forward to the final

completion of the treaty that will renew and reinforce our relationship.

Palau would also like to acknowledge the significant support we have received over the years from our friend Japan. We are hopeful that expansion and reform of the Security Council will result in permanent membership of the Council for Japan. In addition, we would like to thank the Republic of China on Taiwan for its friendship and economic support in helping Palau to achieve its Millennium Development Goals and move on to the post-2015 development agenda through grants and technical assistance in the areas of infrastructure, food security enhancement and human capacity. We strongly support Taiwan's expanded participation in the United Nations system, acknowledge the expansion of its meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms, and call on the United Nations system to accept Taiwan's participation as a valuable contributor to our collective efforts.

Beginning with the leadership of those assembled here, and working down to every level of international action and cooperation, we can respond, in a timely and expedited fashion, to the real emergencies we face. But the time for excuses is over. It is now time for leaders to lead.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dhoinine (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me convey to the United States authorities our full gratitude for the always warm and fraternal hospitality they show us at this great annual event in New York at the United Nations. I also express my sincere congratulations to the President, and I wish him every success and an excellent conduct of the work of the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session on the post-2015 development agenda. Finally, on behalf of my delegation and myself, I join the other heads of delegations present in the Hall to express my full gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his willingness to serve our world with the commitment and self-sacrifice for which he is known.

At a time when the world is facing the most serious kinds of crises, blind barbaric terrorist acts, which we strongly condemn, have just been perpetrated in Kenya, claiming dozens of innocent victims, including women and children. At a time when armed conflicts are challenging our common abilities to build a world where peace reigns, the crisis that has been evolving in Syria for two and a half years, with its litany of distress and human tragedy, should call on us to reach an early settlement of the conflict and put an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria against innocent populations, just as we vigorously condemn the perpetrators of that horrible act.

Let me formally draw our attention to other crises and other evils that, while they may appear to us to be minor or insignificant, are also every bit as serious. They are serious particularly because they lead to a heavy loss of human lives and, for those who live with them daily, they frequently give rise to frustration, scorn and a sense of abandonment.

At the same time, those other evils actually should not even exist, because it was together in the United Nations that our predecessors unanimously, in a spirit of the equality of peoples, universal justice, fairness and humanism, decided with an open heart and free spirit to make humankind more harmonious for the well-being of our species. Indeed, it was our Organization that decided to decolonize all territories under the colonial yoke. It set the rules, laid out a path, and supported the peoples to be freed.

Let me also pay tribute to the permanent members of the Security Council and to all States Members of the United Nations for the responsible attitude they

have demonstrated since the creation of the United Nations to the present time in supporting national liberation movements and organizations, particularly in our continent of Africa. It is, however, regrettable that, 68 years after its inception and after the adoption of the Charter, the Assembly continues to bear witness today to a situation in which the territory of a small island State — in this case my own country, the Comoro Archipelago — remains under the thumb of another State, a major Power and a permanent member of the Security Council — the State of France.

And yet the Organization came out unequivocally in favour of the independence of the Comoro Archipelago, in accordance with resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and 2621 (XXV) of 12 October 1970, containing the Plan of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Furthermore, resolutions 3161 (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973 and 3291 (XXIX) of 13 December 1974 reaffirm the unity and territorial and integrity of the Comorian islands and the inalienable right of its people to self-determination and independence.

Thus, the Security Council, through its unanimous adoption of resolution 376 (1975) of 17 October 1975, recommended to the General Assembly that the Comoros be admitted to membership in the United Nations. The Comoros therefore became a Member of the United Nations, under resolution 3385 (XXX) of 12 November 1975, which reaffirms the need to respect the unity and integrity of the Comoro Archipelago, composed of the islands of Anjouan, Grande Comore, Mayotte and Mohéli. I recall that all Member countries, including the European countries, voted in favour of that resolution. France did not oppose it.

Can those who lead our States and Governments, guarantors of the independence and integrity of their territory, imagine the frustration and moral torture of a Head of State who has to deal with such a tragic situation on a daily basis? In addressing them, I am letting my heart speak. They may rest assured that all my fellow citizens do the same daily. What have we, the Comorian people, done that is so serious that history does not treat us as it does all other peoples of the world? Why must we time and time again explain or justify the united nature of our people, its history, its geography or its culture? Moreover, when some seek to persuade us that it is because a part of our population supposedly expressed a desire to remain colonized, we sincerely wonder if they are trying to relive the Berlin Conference of 1885.

If that were indeed the case, are we to understand that these same people would seek to raise that issue with all peoples who wish to remain themselves or change their destiny? Since it is the desire of all people to strive for freedom, what would happen if one day the Comorian people of Mayotte called for its freedom from France? What a historical inconsistency that would be, and what norms of international law would the Organization act on?

Since 6 July 1975, the date on which my country, the Comoros Archipelago, acceded to its sovereignty, the Comorians have continued to call simply for the implementation of international law. They have done so in vain. And yet, in other similar cases, certain major Powers demand compliance with the same international law and win their case. Thus, the movement of peoples among the islands of the Comoros Archipelago, which is an inalienable right, is impeded by an unfathomable and unacceptable decision of the French authorities who, in 1994, imposed a visa on travel between Mayotte and the three other Comorian islands. That visa system has to date led to the death of nearly 10,000 of my fellow citizens, making the strait that separates Mayotte and the other islands the largest marine cemetery in the world. Our common conscience requires that we act quickly.

In all international forums, including the United Nations, the international community, while recognizing the right of the Comorians to recover their territorial integrity, has repeatedly called upon the two parties involved, the Comoros and France, to enter into negotiations in order to find a lasting and equitable solution to this unfortunate territorial dispute in accordance with international law. Each of my predecessors in turn undertook negotiations with the French State, but it is undeniable that we are still at square one.

Since I was elected President of the Republic, I have thought a great deal about the issue and consulted widely. The responsibilities I have assumed require changing a game that has remained unchanged now for 38 years. After an initial meeting with my French counterpart, President François Hollande, in Kinshasa, on the sidelines of the Summit of La Francophonie, I understood that the new French authorities were at long last ready to find a solution to the issue of the Comoros.

I noted and acknowledge that France today is prepared to play its historic role as a State that is respectful of international law, regardless of what that law may say on any particular subject. What France has recently done for Mali is the most eloquent example of that.

On that note, let me join the Malian authorities and people and the African continent in general to thank the French authorities who took the responsible decision to ensure that the armed forces of the Republic of Chad and the countries in the West African region join the French armed forces in helping Mali recover its unity and territorial integrity. I take this opportunity also to welcome the presence among us here of His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, and express our joy in sharing with the brother people of Mali the sense of pride at their having recovered the integrity of their territory.

Move by the same ideal and the same hope of seeing my country recover its territorial integrity, I warmly welcomed the invitation from President François Hollande to carry out a working visit to France in order to undertake serious negotiations and give a new impetus to our relations, particularly on the issue of the Comorian island of Mayotte. In the wake of that visit, we signed and issued a political declaration, the so-called Paris Declaration. Before my visit, I consulted the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in order to ensure that our latest effort was in keeping with the principles upheld by our continental organization and also to consult her expertise. I take this opportunity to express all our gratitude to Ms. Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, for her ongoing support to our country.

In thus expressing myself, I call on the entire international community to bear witness to my request that the Secretary-General provide his expertise, support and backing throughout the negotiations for the new dynamic to which we and the French have resolutely committed.

I would like to inform the General Assembly that the issue of Mayotte will henceforth be on our agenda every year and that we, the Comorian authorities, are commited to reporting every year on the course of the negotiations until a lasting settlement is found to the issue of the sovereignty of my country. My country calls on the United Nations and other international organizations with which we are affiliated — including the African Union, the International Organization of La Francophonie, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Indian Ocean Commission — to provide us with their full support during the negotiations.

A high joint council, the follow-up body to the Paris Declaration that I mentioned previously, will be established in the weeks ahead. It will begin its work this year by considering the problem of the movement of goods and persons in order to put an irreversible end to the human tragedies that daily afflict all Comorian families.

Never has our world has been so close to achieving the objective for which we, the world's leaders, meet in this United Nations temple at least once a year. That goal, as the United Nations Charter stipulates, is to maintain international peace and security. It would therefore be appropriate for me, before I conclude my statement, to commend the efforts of the international community that have led to considerable progress in Madagascar, thereby opening the path to the forthcoming presidential elections in that great brother country.

In order to ensure that "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", which is the theme of the sixty-eighth session, is not just one more pipe dream, we need to act quickly to shelter our peoples from fear and need. Let us dare to fight injustice. Let us dare to put an end to deadly conflict. Let us dare to make peace our daily struggle and our sole reason for being, so that humankind may live in harmony.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales

Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to convey my greetings to the Secretary-General and all the Presidents, Heads of State, delegations and international organizations from across the world. I convey also my special greetings to those attending this annual general debate of the General Assembly.

We are here once again, as usual, to share experiences relating to leadership and to work for the sake of life, humanity, equality and social justice. But we are also here to express our profound differences as concerns life, peace and democracy. Over the past few days I have been listening to the statements made by certain Powers, which leave a lot to be desired in terms of liberty, equality, dignity and sovereignty.

Thanks to the awareness of the Bolivian people, I have now held the presidency for almost eight years. In that time — despite the economic and financial crises in some so-called developed, industrialized and, I would even say, even exaggeratedly industrialized countries, because some Powers industrialize simply to put an end to life — we in Bolivia have an economic growth rate of 4.8 per cent, on average. Previously it was just over 2 per cent under the economic policies of the free market and neoliberalism. This year the economic growth rate is estimated at 6 per cent, at least, so we are doing well.

I would like to point out that thanks to that economic growth, in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) we have reduced poverty; we have met the MDG of reducing poverty and extreme poverty. United Nations data for 2011 indicates that that year 1 million Bolivian men and women entered the middle class. Bolivia has 10 million inhabitants, so that means that 10 per cent of Bolivia's inhabitants improved their economic status. The rate of undernutrition for children under the age of 5 has decreased even more than required by the related Millennium Development Goal. The literacy-rate goal for people between 15 and 24 years of age was met, and UNESCO declared Bolivia a country free of illiteracy thanks to the cooperation of Cuba and Venezuela, which have been working with us since 2006-2007.

The Goal on coverage in terms of maternal health has been reached, and maternal and child mortality has decreased. Thanks to that economic growth we have been able to create vouchers for pregnant women and for children under 2 years of age, which has made possible a decrease in maternal and child mortality. Coverage in terms of potable water has increased. For example, we created a programme entitled "My water (more investment for water)". I must thank the Andean Development Corporation and the Inter-American Development Bank for their contributions. With their funding we put together "My water" I and II, and we are now on the third programme, with $300,000 per municipality in rural areas. That has made it possible for us to provide some municipalities with 100 per cent coverage in terms of potable water.

I have just come from a major event in the department of Santa Cruz, where I visited several municipalities. In two of them, the mayors — who are not from the party in power but from other parties — told me that "My water" III will result in 100 per cent of the local population having drinking water. We have made advances in that area. Investment in water is a blessing for life. It means minimizing disease, because potable water helps people avoid contracting diseases.

I would like all here to know that we have been able to achieve this thanks to a State that lives in conditions of sovereignty and dignity. Why am I saying this? Because previously, politically we were subject to the American empire. The embassies of the United States decided who would be minister. Economically, we were subject to the International Monetary Fund. From the time we arrived, we have said "Enough!" to submitting to international organizations and to the United States embassy. Previously, for any loan, the International Monetary Fund set conditionalities, blackmailing the various Governments. Those conditionalities involved our giving up our natural resources to transnational companies, so that Bolivia would privatize basic services. But basic services are a human right and cannot be private property. So when we freed ourselves politically and economically, we started to do better.

One of the policies we adopted was to nationalize hydrocarbons — gas and oil. I want the Assembly to know, just to share a small experience, that previous State contracts with transnational oil companies stated that the bearer acquired the right to the land at the mouth of the well. When union leaders asked Governments why the gas and oil were not the property of Bolivians, they told us that as long as they were underground they belonged to the Bolivians, but once they were out of the ground that was no longer the case. They invented this title business for the land at the mouth of the well.

In addition, 82 per cent of the benefits went to transnationals, especially in mega-oilfields, and 18 per cent to Bolivians. It was looting, it was theft. But since we nationalized hydrocarbons, I must say that we have really begun to improve the economic situation and the social conditions in our country. Just one example: oil income in 2005, before I was President, was $300 million. This year, thanks to nationalization and the fight waged by social movements, oil sales will total more than $5 billion. Last year we almost reached $5 billion. That figure continues to grow with new investments, and today we have reached the stage of giving added value to those natural resources.

As the Assembly is aware, I am not an expert in politics or in economic matters. But I am here at the request of the Bolivian people, learning daily about the needs, problems and demands of my people, the people of Bolivia.

I would therefore also like to say that this joint work with the social movements, which are the organized representatives of the people, is going well. I would like the United Nations and the Secretary-General to know that we have issued a directive and are working on the patriotic agenda for 2025. What exactly is that agenda about? As Bolivia was founded in 1825, the year 2025 will be our bicentennial as a republic, while we are now a plurinational State. We are working with all social movements and authorities, be they local mayors or provincial Governments, to establish a medium- and long-term plan that will make it possible to guarantee a future for the generations to come.

Besides local issues, there are also pending regional issues, such as the one between Bolivia and Chile on sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean. An invasion began on 14 February 1879, which on 23 March of the same year gave rise to a limited resistance. Who invaded us? It was the Chilean oligarchy of the time, along with British companies. We lost our access to the sea, and many meetings have been subsequently held on the issue. An unfair treaty was imposed on us, and it was not observed.

I want the Assembly to be aware of the following. In a number of meetings with former Presidents and with the latest brotherly President of Chile, we have tried to reach an understanding. However, there has never been an official proposal to resolve the issue of the Bolivian people's irrevocable right to return to the Pacific with sovereignty.

What did the President of Chile say in September 2010 when he addressed the General Assembly here in New York (see A/65/PV.12)? He said that treaties were inviolable and they must not be touched. On 28 January 2013, during the summit of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC) in Santiago, President Piñera Echeñique said that of course treaties could be perfected. First, he said they were untouchable, and then he said they could be perfected. That shows that this issue is on his mind and that it needs to be resolved.

On 17 December 2012, Piñera Echeñique publicly stated that Chile would ensure respect not only for the treaties it had signed, but also its sovereignty, with all the strength in the world. But in January at the CELAC summit President Piñera Echeñique said that sovereignty could not be touched unless economic interests were at stake. On 22 September 2011, at the General Assembly President Piñera Echeñique said that there were no ongoing territorial issues between Chile and Bolivia (see A/66/PV.15). However, on 2 February 2013, in an interview with *La Tercera*, a Chilean newspaper, he recognized the following: Chile has offered Bolivia autonomy in a territorial enclave. In other words, he is trying to resolve the issue. But that proposal has never been made official.

There is a fourth contradiction. On 11 November 2012, at the Ibero-American Summit held in Cadiz, Spain, the President of Chile said that Chile would demand that a valid treaty that was still in force — the treaty of 1904 — be respected, and that any conversation about the matter must be bilateral in nature: it did not belong in a multilateral forum such as that in which we are participating today.

What did the President of Chile say on 2 February 2013? He said that the possibility of a gateway to the sea without sovereignty, north of Arica, will come to an end if Peru won at The Hague. Another contradiction: in June 2013, President Sebastián Piñera Echeñique said that Chile had the right to defend its territory, sea and sovereignty with strength and conviction and that Chile was a country that would never bend in the legitimate defence of its territory. In June, he said that Chile would not cede to the Bolivian position while President Morales continued to belittle him. On 7 September 2013, he said that, naturally, they would respect the ruling from The Hague. When it came to the ruling from The Hague, they were a country that respected rulings.

I simply wanted to state that to avoid conflict. Since its foundation as a plurinational State, Bolivia has been by nature a peaceful State. With all due respect, I would like to inform members that we have turned to international courts. We have requested the International Court of Justice to declare that the Republic of Chile has an obligation to effectively negotiate, in a timely fashion and in good faith, sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean in order to re-establish Bolivia's past, present and future rights to the sea. I want members to be aware that this request cannot and should not be interpreted as an act of hostility. On the contrary, it is a demonstration of Bolivia's respect and confidence in the mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Members cannot imagine how much damage we have suffered, economically and geographically, or the damage that has been done to the people of Bolivia and to our past and future generations, by the 1879 invasion. Our grandparents continue to ask us when we are going to go back to the sea, because Bolivia was born with an outlet to the Pacific Ocean. So that everyone is aware: we are seeking a peaceful solution to this dispute.

We have heard the various statements made over the past few days. One cannot listen to every single one of them, but I want to say that, while we are working to eliminate extreme poverty, we, the Heads of State and Government, are also working for peace with social justice. Nevertheless, a handful of Powers promote wars, armed conflict and military intervention without respecting even international organizations.

We have heard here statements about freedom, democracy, peace, justice and security. As peoples who have been the subject of interventions and have been exploited, marginalized and robbed of our natural resources by the empires of the time, we wonder what democracy, what peace and what social justice some Presidents who come here are talking about. We witness Presidents and their retinues blocking airspace and not providing guarantees of our attendance to this forum, for example. How can they speak of democracy, when the spy services of the United States violate human rights and the privacy and security of other States while using private companies? It turns out that they spy not only on democratic Governments, but even on their own allies, their own citizens and the United Nations itself. Well, fine, let them spy on us anti-imperialist Presidents and Governments. But spying on the United Nations? Spying on their allies? I feel that there is a great deal of overweening arrogance towards humankind.

That is why we continue to speak out. Not only do they spy, they also hatch coups d'état. What peace can we speak of when military spending sacrifices the human rights of our peoples? I would like to ask the people of the United States: How is it possible, when there are so many people out of work, for their country's Government and President to spend $700 billion on the military and espionage annually, when there are so many of our brothers in the United States who are homeless and jobless and without an education? One cannot understand how that country can spend so much money interfering with other countries while leaving its own unprovided for.

They talk to us of human rights while torture is being carried out in the prisons of Guantánamo and on military bases in the Middle East, and while union and political leaders who do not share imperialist and capitalist views are also tortured. I would like to say to the United States that it must not believe it is master of the world. It is mistaken. Furthermore, it signs agreements yet refuses to sign some of the most important treaties in the world. It does not respect United Nations resolutions.

The security of the empire and the fight against terrorism have become the biggest excuse and tool for unilateral military intervention. Terrorism cannot be combated through more military spending and interventions or the training of military forces. As far as I know, the way to fight terrorism is with social policies, not military bases; with religious tolerance, more democracy, more equality of justice and more education.

What country is free from problems? Of course there are differences. The best thing to do is to provide means, even if not all our Governments have the same economic policies. Capitalism wants to emerge from its crisis through war and armed intervention. We must ask ourselves who benefits from the wars. Who distributes the natural resources after an intervention? Whose hands do they end up in, once countries are bombed? Who is really governing in the United States, I wonder? Is it its citizens, or the companies that promote wars? From outside, at least — I am not an ambassador living in the United States — what we see is that those who finance political and election campaigns are bankers and big businessmen, and they are the ones setting policy.

Those who govern cannot be mistaken or confused about the conflict in Syria. Naturally, we are against

the use of chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction. But who possesses the greatest nuclear arsenal? Who invented chemical weapons? Who industrialized those weapons that end human lives? In my region, at least, things are perfectly clear. We know whose hands they are in, where they come from and who produces them.

Democracies do not wage war. What we are seeing is that those who make the decisions about wars are the arms industry, the financial system and oil companies. Plutocracy has become a substitute for democracy. The Government of the rich and powerful decides the fate of the world. We are facing a new moment in the imperial geopolitical disposition — and I do not wish to revisit how Latin America and the Caribbean, like Africa and the Middle East, were at one time carved up by various imperial Powers, who were interested not in resolving issues of poverty, democracy and equality but rather in those countries' natural resources — and now, once again, those Powers wish to divide it all up through military intervention and with military bases.

Another subject being debated is the colonization of space, as we have seen in recent years. Those who believe they are the masters of the world have told us that their power has no limits and that they can intervene wherever they feel like. Again, I wonder what the United Nations is for. What do we have treaties and conventions for? What use is multilateralism? Human multilateralism we welcome; inhuman interventionism will be combated by people all over the world. I believe that as a union leader and as someone from one of the most humiliated sectors in the history of Latin America, the indigenous peasant peoples.

War is a business for capitalism. There can be no peace without justice; there can be no equality as long as the business of war has pride of place. It starts and wages wars for its businesses. That is why I believe it is important at this event to consider such issues in depth.

Another instrument of domination is the fight against drug trafficking. But I have to say that despite the efforts of the Bolivian people and Government, there are certain Powers that do not shoulder their responsibilities in combating the traffic in drugs, because the drug market is in the capitalist countries. Since we got rid of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and launched our own national policy — and thanks to some of our neighbours, such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile, to which I am grateful for their joint efforts — we have seen improvements and a better way of fighting drug trafficking than the way imposed by the DEA and the United States. I welcome the fact that the United Nations has acknowledged the decrease in drug trafficking in Bolivia, but it has not been certified by the Government of the United States. Who should we believe, the United States or the United Nations? I leave it up to the Assembly.

I have felt somewhat insecure when it comes to visiting the United Nations in New York, which is why we should think seriously about changing the location of the Headquarters of the Organization. The Headquarters of the United Nations should be in the territory of a State that has ratified all the treaties adopted by the United Nations. As the Assembly is aware, the Government has never ratified the treaties on human rights or the rights of Mother Earth. They do not guarantee us visas or overflights. I offer my solidarity with my friend Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of Venezuela. How can we be sure that a meeting of the United Nations here in New York is secure? Perhaps some of us do, but those of us who do not share the views of imperialism and capitalism feel completely insecure.

I would just like to say, though not out of fear, that we should not be complicit in such an arrogant attitude to the peoples of the world. How can we genuinely believe in the United Nations if we do not respect resolutions — for example, those ending the economic blockade of Cuba. There are only two or three countries that do not vote to end it. Most of us welcome it and vote for the resolution every time. But if it is not implemented and not respected, then why are we here at the United Nations?

Furthermore, I wish to inform the Assembly that everyone knows that the United States harbours terrorists, criminals and the corrupt. They escape from Bolivian justice and arrive here. The United States Government is not assisting in the fight against corruption. What kind of an agreement could we then have in the fight against corruption?

Beyond that, the United States accuses the Governments of other countries. It accuses Cuba, of promoting terrorism. How can Cuba do that? Perhaps it is due to such accusations that only 60 or 70 Presidents, of the more than 190, have come here. I feel that such policies scare off Presidents. Who will come next year to vote, when resolutions are never respected?

That reason, and many others, should encourage us to consider changing the Headquarters of the United Nations. I do not expect it to be Bolivia, or South America. There are countries that have ratified all of the human rights treaties. That is where the Headquarters of the United Nations should be located.

There is blackmail when it comes to visas. I had to wait for a visa in order to come here, and then it was for only four, five or six days — no more. What good is such a visa? One has to watch the clock and when to leave, because the visa will be taken from us. We are being threatened, intimidated and blackmailed with visas.

If the Assembly is here to seriously discuss the well-being of humankind, perhaps my country can share with some who are present here the idea of seriously considering establishing a tribunal of the peoples, including major international organizations that defend human rights, to begin an investigation of the Obama Government.

I was surprised by the words of United States President Obama at the start of his term. It struck me when he stated, "I was elected to end wars". Those were his words, found in newspapers, on radio and on television. I said to myself, this fraternal President of the United States originates from a family that suffered from discrimination like me. We are going to agree and we will put an end to war. I was deeply struck by that. Now we are seeing the exact opposite. Perhaps it is due to the Nobel Peace Prize. We congratulate him. In the end, however, it is a Nobel Peace Prize, rather than a Nobel war prize.

What is the basis for a trial? It certainly includes crimes against humanity and the bombing of Libya. I would like to know who owned the oil in Libya beforehand? Who owns it now? Previously, at the least, the people of Libya benefited from that oil, but how is it being managed and used now? What happened in Iraq? I am convinced that behind any war or intervention, a plan is being devised on how to later seize the natural resources. That was our experience in Bolivia. However, we have recovered our natural resources democratically, without bullets but with votes, not with money but based on the awareness of the Bolivian people.

As for prosecuting acts of international terrorism, the financing of terrorist groups and the arming of opposition forces — once I expelled the United States Ambassador to Bolivia, I had no regrets. We are better off now, politically and democratically. We are now ending our cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development, which had been plotting. We want and welcome cooperation, so long as it is unconditional and free of blackmail or preconditions involving Presidents or the privatization of natural resources and basic services.

Imagine the damage inflicted on a country by an economic blockade. It is the best tool of genocide. Therefore, if we are truly responsible for the well-being of humankind, if we are responsible for truth, justice and peace, then we must organize to fight back so that no president — from South America, the Middle East or anywhere else in the world — will ever again cause harm to life or to humankind.

Like previous debates here — on the financial, climate, economic and food crises — the Assembly is now addressing the issue of interventionism. As long as imperialism and capitalism exist, peace, justice, liberty, dignity and sovereignty for the people of the world will never be possible. I am convinced of that, because I have a little experience. We should therefore contemplate a world free of oligarchies, monarchies and hierarchies, and then consider the sort of human order we would want for the world.

All of us possess sovereignty and dignity, whether we are small and backwards — "developing", as they call us — or whatever our situation. What damages the political class? Sometimes it is arrogance, the abuse of power and corruption. As Presidents of Governments, it is our obligation to fight against such policies that cause so much harm to the political class. It is our obligation to change the politics. In my experience, politics is not about business or profits. It is about service, commitment and extending the greatest effort for one's people. If anyone thinks that politics involves business or profit, they are wrong. Such President or Government will not go far. If a Government allows bankers, financiers or multinational corporations to govern, it is mistaken. A Government must be controlled by a President who has been democratically elected by the people, with the participation of society and for the well-being of the majority of the people.

We welcome the fact that private property is respected. However, it is something else when economic policy and governing are considered in favour of the few, rather than of the many. With my little bit of experience, therefore, I call on all members to fight

against the economic policies that cause great harm to humankind around the world.

I reiterate that as long as imperialism and capitalism exist, the struggle will continue, the people will continue to rise up, but there will be no justice. Freeing ourselves from imperialism and capitalism will certainly ensure peace and social justice and dignity and sovereignty for our peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Ali Zeidan, Prime Minister of Libya

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Libya.

Mr. Ali Zeidan, Prime Minister of Libya, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ali Zeidan, Prime Minister of Libya, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Zeidan (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I warmly congratulate Mr. John Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly. I wish him every success in his endeavours. I also wish to convey my greetings to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon and to commend him and his team for the remarkable efforts they continue to exert in the realization of the lofty purposes and principles that have been at the heart of the United Nations since its inception.

I have the honour to speak before the Assembly today on behalf of my country, the new Libya, which is forging ahead towards democracy, establishing State institutions, the rule of law, development and prosperity, despite the range of political, economic, social and cultural difficulties and obstacles we face as a result of the burdensome legacy left behind by the dictatorial regime. I wish to assure the international community, and the United Nations in particular, that Libya is working tirelessly, with confidence and determination, to establish State laws and institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the peaceful transfer of power, as well as to forge positive partnerships with development partners that are fully respectful of the interests of all countries, including non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and to promote peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international laws and norms.

The people of Libya will always highly appreciate the important role played by the United Nations in the establishment of Libya, beginning with resolution 289 (IV), of 21 November 1949, on the independence of Libya, through to the Security Council's adoption of resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011), to protect Libyan civilians and support the revolution of 17 February 2011. That positive role continues through the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), which is making commendable and praiseworthy efforts to provide technical advice and training, raise awareness and build capacity in various sectors in order to advance the democratization process, achieve justice and national reconciliation and rebuild modern State institutions. UNSMIL has been crucial in launching and supporting a national dialogue, which will start in a few days. The Council of Ministers is now considering a draft law on victims of rape and violence during the dictatorial era and the liberation war.

In response to the relevant Security Council resolutions, we are cooperating with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to expand the scope of investigations into those who committed crimes against the Libyan people, through the implementation of the mechanisms and rulings of the ICC and in line with national legislation. We are looking forward to the cooperation of the countries concerned, in particular neighbouring countries, in surrendering and extraditing the wanted individuals of the former regime.

We trust that an understanding will be reached with the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, with regard to security and the need to impose control over our vast land and sea borders and to lift the ban on arms completely. Libya faces a broad range of problems caused by illegal migration. This requires efforts to be coordinated at the international and regional levels in order to find an urgent solution

and curb the phenomenon of illegal migration, ensure respect for the sovereignty of States, promote and ensure the rights and dignity of the illegal migrants themselves and enhance cooperation with international organizations.

I would be remiss if I failed to express my sincere gratitude to the International Organization for Migration for its cooperation with the relevant international institutions. I also wish to thank the European Union for its assistance to Libya in curbing the problem of illegal migration through its assistance to Libyan institutions in securing the vast borders.

Libya faces a number of security threats, including the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, illegal migration and arms smuggling. That is why we hosted a regional ministerial conference on border security in March 2012, which included the adoption of the Tripoli action plan for border cooperation and the establishment of mechanisms and structures for cooperation and the sharing of information and experience in the field of border protection and control.

In addition, last spring, the Libyan city of Ghadames hosted a meeting of the Heads of Government of Libya, Algeria and Tunisia to strengthen joint security operations in addressing the challenges posed by developments in the Sahel and Sahara regions.

We also contributed to the ministerial conference on support to Libya in the areas of security, justice and the rule of law, which was held in Paris in February at the initiative of the Libyan interim Government and with the support of the French and British Governments. Two action plans were adopted at that meeting on the development of the Libyan security and justice sectors.

The interim Government is sparing no efforts in reactivating the role of the Arab Maghreb group to promote political, development and security cooperation and to promote the interests of all countries in North Africa and the Arab Maghreb. Libya is taking all the necessary steps to get back on the path to development and to complete national projects in all sectors, which requires substantial funds. It is crucial that we recover the looted funds that were smuggled out of Libya. From this rostrum, I reiterate the call that we made to all States to cooperate with and help us locate and recover those funds.

We also emphasize our request to the countries in which there are Libyan investments to ensure the right of the Libyan State to those investments and to prevent any compromise thereof, especially in some countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where coercive measures have caused significant damage to those investments.

My country attaches great importance to human rights issues and to the process of safeguarding and promoting those rights. Preventing any violations in this area is therefore a priority for Libya's interim Government. That is why our Government, in coordination with the General National Congress, has taken a number of steps to that end. They include amending or repealing legislation that is inconsistent with the international obligations of the Libyan State in the field of human rights, as well as setting in motion a process of constitutional review of legislation that runs counter to the provisions of the Constitutional Declaration. We are also taking steps to ratify or accede to certain international human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. Preparations are under way to accede to other international agreements, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

A further step includes developing a practical mechanism for the implementation Human Rights Council decision 19/39, in order to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to Libya through direct cooperation between the Libyan Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the assistance of UNSMIL. We are also establishing a ministerial committee to follow up on the situation of human rights in Libya, headed by the Minister of Justice and including the deputy ministers of the interior, defence and culture, as well as representatives of civil society. We are making every effort to prepare for the visit to Libya by High Commissioner Navi Pillay before the end of this year. We hope that the visit will reinforce the relationship between Libya and the Office of the High Commissioner, in the mutual interests of both.

Libya contributes very seriously to the international efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and safeguard international peace and security, and we cooperate fully with international institutions and organizations in this field. We reiterate the call to conclude an unconditional and legally binding instrument to protect non-nuclear States from the threat or use of nuclear weapons, pursuant to the relevant

General Assembly resolutions and in line with the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons* (A/51/218, annex).

I also reaffirm Libya's full support for international efforts aimed at establishing additional zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in various regions of the world. To contribute to the achievement of that goal, Libya is working, in coordination with its brothers in the League of Arab States, to convene a successful conference on making the Middle East such a zone — a conference that, unfortunately, has been postponed. We call upon the Secretary-General and other organizing parties to make every effort, as stipulated in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to convene the conference before the end of 2013. We call upon all States concerned to participate in in the conference in order to ensure its success.

Libya shares the concerns of the international community concerning the scourge of terrorism, which is not exclusive to any particular religion, nationality or culture. We have acceded to most international instruments on combating terrorism and are cooperating with other countries in order to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism, in accordance with resolution 66/105.

The Palestinian people have now been living in truly tragic humanitarian conditions for more than six decades, starting with their expulsion from their homes and continuing with the annexation of most of their territory, the confiscation and levelling of their land and the demolition of their homes — all in flagrant violation of international humanitarian laws and norms. The time has now come for the international community to assume its responsibilities to put an end to this tragedy as soon as possible by taking urgent and decisive action to ensure the full protection of the Palestinian people and to put an end to their daily suffering and the injustice done to them. That should be done through a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue that ends the occupation and enables the Palestinian people to regain their territory and establish their own independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and makes it possible for all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

The tragic developments taking place in Syria make it incumbent upon the international community to put an end to that human tragedy and stop the bloodshed and destruction. We therefore call upon the Security Council to act in accordance with the concept of the responsibility to protect in order to find a solution to the problem, through consensus among its members, so as to save the Syrian people from the daily massacres and help them to achieve their legitimate demands.

Libya once again calls upon the international community and human rights institutions to put an end to the human tragedy being experienced by the Muslim Rohingya minority in Myanmar and to accelerate the setting up of an international investigation committee to bring those responsible for the tragedy before international justice, ensure the return of the displaced to their homes and provide compensation to the victims.

A revolution took place in Libya to put an end to despotism and dictatorship, a revolution that was the result of deep and long suffering. I assure the Assembly that, with the will of the people who brought about that revolution, our Government will build State institutions, uphold the rule of law, protect its borders, fulfil its promises, honour its obligations towards neighbouring countries and work for the promotion of peace and security. The revolution will achieve peace and security. I wish the Assembly every success at this session.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Libya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ali Zeidan, Prime Minister of Libya, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (Trinidad and Tobago): This evening, as the Chairperson of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I am very delighted and honoured to extend to President Ashe our congratulations on his assumption of the position of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. His elevation to preside over this central organ of the United Nations is testimony to the contribution that CARICOM, as a grouping of small States, continues to make to the advancement of the global agenda for peace, security and development. Indeed, it is evidence of the principle of the sovereign equality of all States enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Nowhere else is that principle more recognizable than in the General Assembly. Trinidad and Tobago is confident that the President will discharge his mandate with distinction and in an impartial manner for the benefit of all States.

In 2000, world leaders gathered at the General Assembly and launched the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were aimed at achieving specific targets on poverty alleviation, universal education, gender equality, child and maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, environmental sustainability, and partnership for development by 2015. At that time, there was renewed faith in the United Nations as the vehicle to assist developing countries, especially the most vulnerable, in their efforts to help reduce poverty and hunger and to provide an enabling environment to assist States, working as partners, to develop their economies so that their peoples may live in conditions free of persistent poverty, inadequate health care and other developmental ills. At that time, it was felt that a new chapter was beginning for the United Nations. It was now being seen as proactive and not reactive.

When we look back on the period between 2000 and the present, what is the reality? What has the international community witnessed since the commitments were made at the Millennium Summit in 2000? The evidence shows that progress towards achieving the MDGs has been uneven. For us in Trinidad and Tobago, we have made some strides in achieving the Goals and, indeed, in some cases, we have surpassed them. For example, with respect to the MDG related to education, not only have we achieved universal primary education, we have also achieved universal secondary education, and we are working towards achieving universal early childhood education.

We are well aware that a number of countries are not on track to realize any of the targets set. By 2005, and again in 2010, it was evident that greater efforts were needed if developing countries as a whole were to meet their MDG targets by the deadline. However, despite numerous constraints in the difficult international economic and financial environment, developing countries have done much to finance their own development. In contrast, many commentators have asserted that developed countries have not done enough to honour their commitments or to provide development assistance to their partners, consistent with the agreement reached at the Millennium Summit.

Arguably, some developed countries have not done enough to reform their trade, tax and transparency policies. Moreover, insufficient attention has been paid to appropriate regulation of the global financial and commodity markets. What has happened is that those in turn have negatively impacted the ability of many developing countries to achieve the MDGs.

Since the 2000 Summit, there has been some progress in the achievement of the internationally agreed goals including the MDGs, but there have also been many pitfalls. It has become apparent that business-as-usual approaches will not suffice to address and eradicate poverty on a global scale; to ensure food, nutrition and energy security; to reverse environmental degradation and to deal with climate change.

Current approaches will not advance the MDG agenda by 2015 or ensure sustainable development in the post-2015 context, as agreed at the June 2012 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Transformative change at the national, regional and international levels is what is required.

In reflecting on the role of the United Nations in addressing the issue of development so that all peoples of the world may live in larger freedom, we welcome the outcome document adopted on 23 September for a renewed commitment to the MDG agenda and the intensification of the efforts towards its achievement by 2015. We also welcome the decision to launch the intergovernmental process that will lead to an agreement on the post-2015 development agenda, which should provide a new and more inclusive architecture to assist us in achieving our global sustainable development objectives.

We therefore applaud the President for focusing on those efforts. We agree with him that it is an opportune moment to begin the discourse on setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda. Some of the preparatory work has already been done. At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders pledged action on sustainable development. We recognized the shortcomings of the MDG process and the need to embrace a new partnership involving Governments, the private sector, civil society and multilateral banks, inter alia, to advance action on sustainable development.

As leaders, we agreed to an outcome document to chart "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), that is, a more sustainable future for the benefit of present and future generations. "The future we want" addresses many facets of what is required to stimulate sustainable development for all countries. Trinidad and Tobago was an active partner at that Conference.

Today we say we will continue to support the emphasis placed on poverty eradication as the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for the achievement of sustainable development. We are also committed to the work already under way on the establishment of the following sustainable development goals: first, the development of the green economy as a tool for achieving sustainable development; secondly, the development of measures that go beyond gross domestic product in assessing development; thirdly, the adoption of a framework for tackling sustainable consumption and production; and, fourthly, a focus on gender equality and the need for greater engagement by civil society in national efforts for sustainable development.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked that

> "The [Rio+20] outcome document provides a firm foundation for social, economic and environmental well-being. It is now our responsibility to build on it. Now the work begins."

Trinidad and Tobago and many developing countries also shared the sentiments of Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, who said: "I am convinced that this Conference will have the effect of bringing about sweeping change." Therefore, as we begin to set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, Trinidad and Tobago respectfully submits that the General Assembly must provide the platform for achieving that sweeping change, so as to ensure that we realize the objective of integrating sustainable development at all levels for a better world for all of humankind.

In keeping with that renewed commitment, we applaud the launch of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to provide an appropriate level of involvement and high-level political oversight for the implementation of our collective sustainable development aspirations. Trinidad and Tobago therefore also supports the President's announcement to commence in a robust manner, during the current session of the General Assembly, deliberations aimed at arriving at a development agenda for the post-2015 period. We support his plans to convene high-level events aimed at addressing women, youth and civil society; human rights and the rule of law; South-South cooperation; and information and communication technology development. In our view, the topics he has selected to guide the three thematic debates scheduled for this session of the Assembly are well chosen, namely, the role of partnerships, how stable and peaceful societies can contribute to development, and the way water, sanitation and sustainable energy can contribute to the post-2015 development agenda.

The areas to be tackled at those events demonstrate that the President has a clear vision of the elements needed to give effect to the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, which embodies the hopes and dreams of the most vulnerable members of the international community. That grouping called for the new development agenda to embrace the spirit of the Millennium Declaration and to maintain the best of the MDGs, but also to go beyond them.

In my view, it is imperative that those high-level meetings underscore that we must go beyond business as usual. There must a coordinated effort to use those events to formulate a development agenda that builds on and further accelerates the reduction of poverty levels, which, since the launch of the MDGs, has already been the fastest reduction in history.

The discourse must also be people-centred or, as some commentators have postulated, it must be based on our common humanity. We also find merit in the comments of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, appointed by the Secretary-General, which indicated that the targets to be agreed for the post-2015 development agenda should be monitored closely and

"the indicators that track them should be disaggregated to ensure no one is left behind and targets should only be considered 'achieved' if they are met for all relevant income and social groups".

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the importance of having people at the centre of our development goals. Consequently, upon our election to office in 2010, we embarked on a national development policy which is built on the premise of prosperity for all. An examination of our national policy will show that in Trinidad and Tobago, we have also observed the importance of an integrated approach to not just development, but development that is sustainable, that integrates the social, economic and environment pillars and which is similar to the plan outlined by President Ashe, to set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda.

My Government has implemented, with varying measures of success, seven pillars that are intended to propel our country's development in order to achieve prosperity for all. I will quickly itemize them: people-centred development, poverty eradication and social justice, national and personal security, information and communications technology, a more diversified, knowledge-intensive economy, good governance, and foreign policy.

Trinidad and Tobago will continue to do its part in assisting the community of nations to craft a post-2015 development agenda to integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

We join other small island developing States (SIDS) in outlining our many development successes, achieved through SIDS leadership, as well as with the assistance of the international community. In addition, and in keeping with the recognition of SIDS as a special case for sustainable development as a result of our unique characteristics, challenges and vulnerabilities, we must also highlight the fact that SIDS have made significantly less progress in the area of development than other vulnerable groups of countries.

In some cases, SIDS are on the front lines of experiencing a reversal of many of the gains that have been achieved. In that regard, as Chair of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, I wish to bring to the attention of this body a matter of significant concern to the States members of CARICOM: the situation of small, highly indebted middle-income countries. Almost as if we were being penalized for our relative success in getting ourselves out of the morass of poverty, the States members of CARICOM that are categorized as middle-income countries have been graduated out of the economic space where they were previously afforded access to concessional financing.

The use of per capita income to determine a country's level of development and its need for grant and concessional financing does not provide a true picture. Per capita income is, at best, an arithmetic ratio that does not address levels of poverty, distribution of income, levels of indebtedness, vulnerability and the capacity to self-generate sustainable economic and social development. If one were to add to that the impact of natural disasters and the effects of sea-level rise and climate change, the fallacy of the middle-income categorization would be wiped out in an instant.

This issue must be considered within the context of SIDS and the post-2015 development agenda. Indeed, in the preparations for our participation in that upcoming discourse, the recognition of the vulnerabilities of small island developing States is one of the guidelines that CARICOM will apply when considering its commitments to the overall agenda.

The economic vulnerability and ability of the States members of CARICOM to build resilience are exacerbated by a debilitating debt overhang, which continues to bedevil the region's growth and development prospects. Similarly, CARICOM takes the view that the embargo applied to Cuba constitutes a drag on the sustainable development prospects of that country and, as such, should be lifted sooner rather than later.

CARICOM's debt stock currently stands at approximately $19 billion, while the debt-to-GDP ratio ranges from 60 to 144 per cent for many States. Many CARICOM States have been recording lower-than-satisfactory growth rates in comparison with other developing countries in Latin America and the world in general. In the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis, CARICOM States continue to experience considerable difficulty in accessing reasonably priced development finance, as several of those States have been categorized at middle-income status and graduated away from access to concessional resources from the multilateral financial institutions.

I would therefore respectfully say that it must be acknowledged that the debt overhang did not result

from profligate spending by CARICOM Governments; instead, it resulted from the makeup of our countries, the geography and history of our countries; our proneness to natural catastrophes; and our very small physical size, which does not lessen the per capita cost of development expenditures for the necessary economic infrastructure and the necessary social development projects.

CARICOM States therefore appeal to the international community to support our call for the immediate review of the very narrow criteria used by multilateral financial institutions and even some development partners, which graduate small highly indebted middle-income countries away from access to concessional resources; and for an early review of the economic and financial situation of graduated small highly indebted middle-income countries with a view to developing programmes for the orderly resolution of their debt overhang, without compromising the future prospects of those States.

We look forward to our participation in the Third International Conference on Small island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in September 2014, and to the observance of the International Year of Small Island Developing States, also in 2014. I am of the view that both the Third SIDS Conference and the International Year of SIDS come at an opportune time and will ensure not only the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and its Mauritius Strategy for the sustainable development of SIDS but also that the concerns of SIDS are well articulated and adequately taken into account in the development of the post-2015 development agenda.

The Assembly may recall that during the general debate in 2011, both The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, put forward the case for reparations for the injustices suffered by African slaves and their descendants, stating that segregation and violence against people of African descent in the region had impaired their capacity for advancement as peoples and nations (see A/66/PV.22). They posited that former slave-owning States should begin a reconciliation process by formally acknowledging the cruelties committed over the 400 years of the African slave trade.

At the Thirty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, held in Port of Spain in July this year, consideration was given to the issue of reparations for Caribbean slavery and native genocide. Heads of Government unanimously agreed to support action on this issue.

CARICOM States therefore urge those Member States that have not yet done so to contribute to the United Nations trust fund to ensure the erection of a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters. We were very heartened when the winning design for the memorial was unveiled Monday right here at the United Nations.

We recognize that peace, security and stability provide an enabling environment for sustainable development. Indeed, national and personal security is one of the seven pillars of our own national sustainable development strategy. At the international level, we are stalwart supporters of the Arms Trade Treaty, agreed to in March of this year and which we have already signed. Today we deposited our instrument of ratification.

In the light of our experiences and challenges in connection the impact of crime, violence and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on our development efforts, we would encourage all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty, so that it may come into force at the earliest opportunity.

Indeed, I want to note with sadness an incident that occurred only recently. One of our brilliant young citizens, Mr. Ravindra Ramrattan, a former President's gold medalist for academic excellence in Trinidad and Tobago, was killed last Saturday in the terrorist attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi. He no doubt fell victim to illegal guns and other weapons in the hands of murderous terrorists. His death is merely one more example of the consequences of illicit cross-border flows of arms.

On the Syrian crisis, it must not be forgotten that good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law at the national and international levels are essential for the achievement of sustainable development. In that context, we wish to underscore our grave concern about the escalating humanitarian crisis in Syria, and repeat our call for the situation to be resolved through dialogue and not the use of any measures that would

violate international law. We submit that if there is prima facie evidence that individuals committed war crimes during this protracted conflict that fall within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, steps should be taken to bring them to justice.

As we move forward with the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member, we have already seen certain areas in which consensus is emerging. I wish to assure the Assembly that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will continue to be actively engaged in advancing the President's efforts to utilize the General Assembly as a primary vehicle for engaging in dialogue on the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Rajoy Brey (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Spain, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Ashe on his new responsibility as President of the General Assembly and to convey to him our firm support and best wishes. His abilities are a guarantee of good work for the next 12 months. I would also like to thank his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his effective work during the past year and to wish him success in his new role.

This General Assembly is the hub of the international system. In it, we all have the same rights, regardless of our size, population or economic development. It is the organ of the United Nations that embodies the sovereign equality of States. The decisions we take here present the international community with a body of opinion that is difficult to rebut. This is the debating Hall of global legitimacy. We are all permanent members here, and it is here that multilateralism takes on its full meaning and effect.

Spain has faith in the United Nations and is firmly committed to the Organization, because we subscribe completely to the purposes and principles it embodies. Our commitment to the United Nations is not mere rhetoric. Spain is the sixth largest contributor to the system. That commitment legitimizes our aspiration to serve the goals of the United Nations in the Security Council in the 2015-2016 biennium. We shall do so in the same spirit of dialogue and consensus as on the most recent previous occasion when the Assembly placed its trust in Spain. In the 10 years that have passed since then, my country has continued to demonstrate by its actions its resolve to faithfully serve the goals of the United Nations — the maintenance of international peace and security, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, international cooperation for development and the promotion and observance of human rights.

The maintenance of international peace and security is a prerequisite for the progress of humankind. Spain believes firmly in the threefold values of peace, security and development, which is why more than 130,000 Spanish soldiers have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions in every region of the world since 1989. Spanish troops are currently serving under the blue flag of the United Nations in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, where since 2006 they have helped to ensure peace and stability in a country that is located in a particularly turbulent region.

Spain works to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and it took an active part in the Arms Trade Treaty negotiations. We have also participated in various international initiatives to prevent nuclear terrorism. Spain has suffered the violence of terrorism and knows that new threats from non-State factions call for a global response through international cooperation. We must comprehensively implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and arrive at a global convention to combat that menace, which transcends borders. The people of Spain know from experience that the responsibility for

terrorism lies with the terrorists alone; it is exclusive to them and non-transferable, whatever its perpetrators may claim. We should always honour the memory of the victims, which is key to denying social or moral legitimacy to terrorism of any kind.

Our commitment to working for peace and security in the world was made evident this year during the crisis in Mali. Spain initially supported the African-led International Support Mission in Mali, and thereafter the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Spanish troops in the European Union mission in Mali are training the country's armed forces, which are responsible for ensuring the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, with full respect for human rights. Mali is defeating terrorism and has regained its territorial integrity, an unquestionable success that we can all be proud of. But it is only the first step. The return to constitutional order, with the holding of presidential elections, marks the start of a second phase of building the open and inclusive institutions that are essential to Mali's future. In the long term, we must continue to support development throughout the Sahel as the only way to promote security, democracy and prosperity in the region.

The entire Assembly should welcome the role played by African organizations in that crisis. Special recognition is due to the African Union, which celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. Spain has very close ties with Africa. That continent's concerns are ours, too. We participate in the African Union's summits and in funding the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and we were the first non-African country to contribute directly to the African Union Commission's budget. Spain has launched a strategic partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and continues to strengthen its ties with other regional organizations in Africa. We back up those commitments with genuine support. Over the past four years, Spain has contributed €100 million to ECOWAS and the same amount to the African Development Bank.

For the past two years, we have been witness to the courageous and determined efforts of Arab peoples to assert their dignity, consolidate their democratic systems and exclude those who promote violence and the violation of fundamental human rights. The road to democracy is not easy, but there cannot and must not be any turning back. Democracy has to be an effort undertaken by all of society, working towards coexistence and inclusiveness, an effort which is based on dialogue, tolerance and respect for human rights. That undertaking should be embraced by every country, not just at the political level but also at the social and economic. To support those processes of democratic governance, Spain has launched the Masar programme, aimed at Governments and civil society in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Assembly is aware that the situation in Syria has become an intolerable, heartbreaking human tragedy, as well as a growing threat to regional and international peace and security. The brutal attack with sarin gas against civilians in Damascus — confirmed by the report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic (see A/67/997) — has been widely condemned in the international community, which firmly believes that that act must not be repeated or go unpunished.

The proposal by Russia and the United States that will allow international control and the subsequent destruction of all stocks of chemical weapons in Syria has been applauded by all. It is now necessary for the Security Council to adopt a resolution to establish a legally binding prohibition on the use of chemical weapons in Syria and to ensure their mandatory destruction. Much rests on that question. As the Secretary-General remarked, it constitutes a challenge to international security, one that if not resolved will represent a collective failure.

Spain firmly believes that only political dialogue between the parties will put an end to the increasingly violent conflict, as was highlighted by the report (A/HRC/24/46) presented to the Human Rights Council. Therefore, we support the efforts of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, to promote a political transition in Syria.

Spain is confident of the success of the "Geneva II" conference. In that respect, I reiterat before the Assembly my call to the parties to de onstrate a constructive attitude. Spain will continue to bolster the opposition forces in order to ensure an orderly and inclusive transition to democracy.

Finally, it is essential to maintain the humanitarian effort to help reduce the suffering of Syria's internally

displaced population and that of the refugees in neighbouring countries.

In a related context, I wish to emphasize that the Middle East peace process is taking on a new perspective. Last year, in this very forum, it was decided by a significant majority to recognize Palestine as a United Nations Observer State. The current negotiations are perhaps the last chance to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for the two States, Israel and Palestine, to live in peace, security and prosperity. At this crucial time for the region, the political leaders concerned, with the support of the international community, must take the bold decisions necessary to achieve the historic goal of peace, and thereby promote stability in the entire region and the world.

My country is a staunch advocate of dialogue and the use of peaceful means for the settlement of disputes. We believe that conflict prevention is one of the main instruments for ensuring peace and security. Therefore, we have participated in the Peacebuilding Commission, the establishment of the Alliance of Civilizations and the establishment, with Austria and Saudi Arabia, of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue.

We believe in mediation for the peaceful settlement of disputes. That is why we are a member of the United Nations Group of Friends of Mediation. Within the Group, together with Morocco, we have launched the initiative on mediation in the Mediterranean region, which has recently started producing results.

The General Assembly has developed a consolidated, universal legal doctrine on decolonization, which Spain has endorsed wholeheartedly. Once again, I must submit to the Assembly the question of Gibraltar, which the Organization included in 1963 in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories awaiting decolonization. The only such territory remaining in Europe, it affects our territorial integrity.

Since that date, the United Kingdom has ignored the mandate of the General Assembly and the commitment made to Spain in the 1984 Brussels Declaration. That anachronism continues to inconvenience the citizens of Gibraltar and the surrounding area. Resting its case on the legitimacy granted by the universal doctrine of the General Assembly, Spain once again reiterates its call to the United Kingdom to resume bilateral dialogue and regional cooperation.

Western Sahara remains one of the unresolved issues at the United Nations. Spain supports the search for a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable solution, one that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. Accordingly, Spain fully endorses the work carried out in that respect by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy.

I would like to highlight the contribution of Latin America and its regional organizations to multilateralism. Their constructive input on global issues, such as the environment and development, is of fundamental importance. During the forthcoming Ibero-American Summit in Panama, we will address global challenges in the political, economic and social contexts and offer some joint responses.

The General Assembly has declared 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation. The human right to water and sanitation is essential for sustainable development and the fight against poverty. That is why, in 2008, Spain set up the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation, endowed with $1 billion for projects in Latin America. Moreover, conscious of the strategic value of water in ensuring peace and security, Spain and Algeria have planned to launch a water strategy for the Western Mediterranean.

Thanks to the work of the United Nations, there is broad awareness of the crucial importance of the fight against climate change, which is a direct and immediate priority. Next year will be the year of the small island developing States and will provide an excellent opportunity to jointly address the problems they face. Their efforts to adapt to climate change and to mitigate its harmful effects must be supported, as they produce the least pollution t suffer the most from its consequences.

As a nation, Spain acts in solidarity and has made every effort to promote the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has channelled its solidarity through the multilateral system of the United Nations in the belief that that system guarantees the principle of neutrality in the allocation of funds to effectively achieve the ultimate goal, namely, the eradication of poverty.

In 2007, Spain, together with the United Nations Development Programme, established the MDG Achievement Fund, which has had a real impact on

the lives of 20 million people through more than 130 programmes in 50 countries, disbursing almost $1 billion. The evaluation of the Fund, which concludes its activities this year, will be a key reference both for analysing compliance with the MDGs and for developing the post-2015 development agenda. The preparation of that agenda is the central theme of this session of the General Assembly. For Spain, the post-2015 agenda should be focused on truly sustainable development, should be universal and should acknowledge the importance of transparent institutions in achieving inclusive growth.

We must therefore clearly define the sustainable development goals in order to complete the process that began in Rio de Janeiro last year. However, it must not be forgotten that only a little more than two years remain to achieve the MDGs. While we can be pleased with the progress made in many areas, there is still a long way to go.

As the Spanish economy starts to grow again, we will significantly support these efforts with generous, intelligent and effective investment in development cooperation.

My country's solidarity can also be seen in terms of humanitarian aid, for which Spain is the world's eighth largest donor. The United Nations is able to respond to humanitarian crises in West Africa and the Sahel faster and more effectively, thanks to the World Food Programme humanitarian aid storage and distribution centre that we built in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Spain has always been a crossroads of cultures, religions and traditions. Ours is an open, pluralistic and tolerant country that respects and integrates the diversity that comes with globalization. The protection and promotion of human rights is a responsibility of the institutions to which all citizens must contribute. Spain was the third country in the world to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and I urge other States to do likewise.

We also take a special interest in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. That is why we joined the Philippines in co-facilitating the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on the Realization of the Millenium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities (resolution 68/3), which took place just a few days ago. I am proud to say that in recognition of that commitment, Spain has been awarded the Franklin D. Roosevelt International Disability Rights Award, which Her Majesty Queen Sofia accepted a few days ago in this very city.

We will also continue to support the work of UN-Women, as we have since its inception. Equality between women and men, the full participation of women in all areas, and efforts to end violence against women and girls are indispensable for true development and constitute a priority for Spain, both nationally and internationally.

Our commitment to multilateralism is inseparable from our desire for a decisive and efficient United Nations. That is why this session of the General Assembly must tackle the issue of Security Council reform, which can be achieved only through the broadest possible consensus founded on the principles of accountability, transparency and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of and support for the Council's actions.

It is also necessary to bring the Organization into line with its means and to rationalize resources so that, together, we may achieve more with less. We therefore give our unconditional support to the progress being made towards system-wide consistency and the "Delivering as one" initiative, to which Spain is the leading contributor. At the same time, the universal character of the United Nations means that we must preserve its multilingualism.

In 2005, Spain announced its candidacy to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2015-2016 biennium. My speech today has underlined the main reasons why I believe that Spain has shown, not with mere words but with concrete actions, its readiness to serve the United Nations in the Security Council, with the same commitment to dialogue and solidarity that we have shown since joining the Organization. We have but a single objective: to uphold human dignity. All our efforts in favour of peace, freedom, democracy, justice, human rights and sustainable development are directed towards that goal. Spain knows that its efforts to uphold human dignity will bear greater fruit through the United Nations, just as the General Assembly may be sure that, in this endeavour, it can count on Spain.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Oqil Oqilov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Oqil Oqilov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Oqil Oqilov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Oqilov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to join with those expressing their cordial congratulations to Mr. John Ashe on his election to serve as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I am convinced that his extensive professional experience will contribute to the efficient and successful work of this session. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his efforts as President at the previous session.

We fully share the commitment of this session to contributing to the development of a post-2015 global development agenda in order to enhance the progress already achieved towards the full implementation of the decisions taken at the Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

The modalities of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development were approved at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, and its first meeting took place some days ago here in New York. We expect the Forum, which replaces the Commission on Sustainable Development, to become a universal and effective platform for regular dialogue and for reviewing achievements and developing and coordinating the programme of actions aimed at promoting sustainable development.

Further progress in achieving sustainable development depends in many respects on the adequate and timely financing of the planned programmes and projects. In that regard, the activities of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, which is mandated to develop recommendations on effective strategies for financing sustainable development, are of key importance.

We support efforts to develop a sustainable development goal for water resources. We believe that the following should be taken into consideration in that regard: ensuring universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, introducing the integrated management of water resources at the national and regional levels, increasing the efficiency of water use and secondary use of water, adequately financing and investing in water-economy facilities and infrastructure, transferring and introducing advanced technologies, and setting up mutually acceptable mechanisms for the gathering and dissemination of information and data.

As stated in the Rio+20 outcome document, "water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges" (*resolution 66/288, annex, para. 119*). The water-related resolutions of the General Assembly initiated by Tajikistan and co-sponsored by other Member States have made an invaluable contribution to the realization of the key role of water resources in the achievement of sustainable development. This year marked the tenth anniversary of our first global project, the International Year of Freshwater, in 2003. The General Assembly took another important decision when it proclaimed 2005-2015 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life" (resolution 58/217).

In 2010, Tajikistan initiated the General Assembly resolution that declared 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation (resolution 65/154). When promoting that resolution in conjunction with other countries, we operated on the assumption that the events during that International Year would contribute to strengthening dialogue and mutual understanding and enhancing cooperation and partnership on the basis of multilevel and comprehensive approaches towards solving water problems. Most important of all, we expected that the International Year of Water Cooperation would become a major platform for consolidating efforts and improving our treatment of water resources.

Today, it is still too early to draw conclusions regarding the outcome of the Year. However, I would like to note that the International Year of Water Cooperation has provided a truly unique opportunity to promote the dialogue on the search for and establishment of a just, mutually advantageous and effective water cooperation system. It is specifically that idea that was the focus of the statements and reports of the

participants at the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation, organized by the Government of Tajikistan in cooperation with the United Nations on 20 and 21 August in Dushanbe. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and all our partners — Member States and international and regional organizations — for their active participation in the work of that successful Conference.

Based on the outcomes of the Conference, the Dushanbe Declaration of the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation and the Dushanbe framework for action on water cooperation were issued and circulated among Member States as documents of the General Assembly. In his statement at the opening ceremony of the Dushanbe Conference, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, proposed the development of a post-2015 vision for global water, which could serve as the road map for the implementation of the water-related sustainable development goals. We would like to call upon all delegations to support that initiative.

It is common knowledge that water resources are central to the achievement of the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). Our efforts at poverty eradication directly depend on the rational management of water resources. The efforts undertaken have not yet produced the large-scale effects that we all expected at the dawn of the Millennium. However, the progress is obvious. According to *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, over the past two decades, more than 2.1 billion people have received access to improved drinking water supplies and 1.9 billion people improved their sanitation conditions. Despite those statistics, 768 million people are still using water from unsafe sources and about 2.5 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation. Moreover, the level of progress differs, not only in regions and countries, but also in rural and urban areas within the same country.

The special General Assembly event that took place recently in New York provided another opportunity for a sound assessment of progress and identification of ways to accelerate implementation of the MDGs and do so with maximum success. That is particularly important under current circumstances, when the financial, economic, food and energy crises and climate change undermine the current still unsustainable and uneven progress in the implementation of MDGs.

Experience shows that it is impossible to achieve development goals without ensuring reliable and universal access to energy. The United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024) provides a unique opportunity for the practical implementation of that aim. We believe that, along with ensuring reliable and sustainable access to energy, it is essential to encourage and promote in every way possible increased use of renewable energy, the transfer of advanced technologies and a more efficient energy supply and energy saving. Tajikistan, which is experiencing economic and population growth, lacks large oil and gas deposits but has huge hydropower potential. It is making every effort to develop all aspects of power generation, on which the population's well-being critically depends.

Our Government is undertaking additional efforts to make full use of its own potential when it comes to addressing socioeconomic issues. On 2 March, Tajikistan successfully completed the negotiation process and joined the World Trade Organization as the one hundred and fifty-ninth member of that multilateral system for regulating world trade. We are interested in advancing the trade interests of developing countries, including those of landlocked countries.

In that context, on 16 and 17 September in Dushanbe, the tenth annual meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia was held. That meeting was followed on 18 September by the High-level International Conference on Development of Road Transport and Transit Potential in Central Asia for the period up to 2023. Those events made an additional contribution to the process of preparing for the 10-year comprehensive review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Effective regional cooperation can provide considerable support to the establishment of a new global partnership for achieving sustainable development. In our region, the development of multidimensional cooperation depends in many respects on strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan. We support the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to address the challenges of the transition period, reconciliation and post-conflict rehabilitation in Afghanistan. We believe that socioeconomic development is the key to achieving lasting peace in that country. International aid to Afghanistan should be, above all, aimed at promoting

a full economic recovery, further strengthening the social sphere and generating new jobs.

The borders with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries should be considered the front line in combating drug-trafficking and, in that regard, efforts with respect to their logistical strengthening and the prompt creation of a modern and effective Afghan border police presence should be stepped up. There is an urgent need for Afghanistan to be fully included in the multidimensional regional cooperation process. Involving the neighbouring countries in the development of Afghanistan and giving due consideration to the regional context in the post-conflict rehabilitation of the country will guarantee success in the ongoing efforts undertaken by the world community.

It is clear that illicit drug trafficking has become one of the major sources of financing of international terrorism. The urgency and magnitude of the problems associated with drugs and illicit drug trafficking are clear indications of the global danger threatening international stability and security as a whole. The international community must unify its efforts to reduce the supply of and demand for drugs and its efforts aimed at integrating national and regional efforts into the international drug-control strategy.

During the period of its membership in the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2014 to 2017, Tajikistan will strengthen and expand its interaction with other Member States and international and regional organizations in practical implementation of the international conventions on drugs and the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

Combating terrorism is a long-term and complicated joint task that will require strengthening by applying the entire spectrum of political, economic and financial measures. We deem it important to expedite the coordination and adoption of a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention. Regional and subregional organizations capable of providing support to the global system for combating international terrorism must play an important role in combating terrorism and extremism.

In recent years, Tajikistan has intensified its interaction with United Nations law enforcement mechanisms, including the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. The country's main priorities in this field are the strengthening of international mechanisms for the protection of human rights, the bona fide implementation of the commitments assumed and the promotion of multilateral cooperation in the field of human rights protection. We view the Human Rights Council as an important forum for constructive dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights.

Guided by the desire to make a contribution to an open and fair dialogue in the field of human rights, Tajikistan has for the first time decided to put forward its candidature for the Human Rights Council for the period 2015 to 2017. We hope that Tajikistan's candidature for that period will receive support at the election to be held during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, in the fall of 2014.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the entire range of long-term goals requires a clear and sound review of the actions under way towards a transition towards sustainable development. We are convinced that the United Nations, as the unique, universal mechanism for multilateral cooperation, must remain the centre of coordination of our collective efforts to ensure peace, security, development and human rights. Meanwhile, the role of the United Nations itself must be strengthened through comprehensive reform and by enhancing its ability to rapidly and adequately respond to problems, effectively meet the numerous global challenges and counter threats.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Oqil Oqilov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Moukoko Mbonjo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to all present the apologies of His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, who wanted to participate in the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly but was not able to owing for constraints relating to the national political calendar. He instructed me to read out the following message:

"As President Ashe takes the reins of the General Assembly, the United Nations is entering a

critical period that should lead to the defining of the international development agenda that will follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Aware of his vast responsibility and the tremendous amount of work he will be facing during this session, I would like to convey to him the sincere congratulations of my country in connection with his election to preside over the Assembly and wish him every success in this challenging but rewarding undertaking. His vast experience in the area of diplomacy, which was made clear when he presided over the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Group of 77 and China, ensures a fruitful outcome to our present deliberations and to the work of the General Assembly for the 12 months ahead.

"Those same qualities were the major strengths of his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and I should like here to commend his dynamic and effective presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

"Lastly, I would extend our sense of satisfaction to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts in the service of peace and economic and social development worldwide.

"This session is beginning in a context marked by the bloody terrorist acts committed in a mall in Nairobi, Kenya, several days ago. This is for me an opportunity to strongly condemn those acts of violence and to convey to the people and the Government of that brotherly country the deepest condolences of the people and the Government of Cameroon.

"Let me, on a more optimistic note, welcome the end of the crisis in Mali, which resulted in the democratic election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. The end of that process, which had the welcome support of the international community, represents a milestone in peacebuilding, security, national reconciliation and development in that country.

"As I noted at the start of my remarks, throughout this session we must reflect deeply on the post-2015 development agenda. During the 2010 high-level debate, we noted that while progress made in achieving some of the MDGs, significant disparities persisted between countries and between regions.

"We noted that, despite the progress, at the current pace of implementation very few countries would achieve all the MDGs by the deadline. With two years to go, we must point out that it will be difficult for Cameroon to achieve some of the Goals. Substantial progress has been made in reaching some of the targets. In the area of health care, which is considered to be the catalyst for economic and social development, with a view to reducing poverty, my country remains committed to the effort to combat the AIDS pandemic. The allocation of substantial resources to the fight against that disease, the distribution of free antiretroviral drugs, the effective care of the sick and the implementation of an efficient prevention programme, including the transmission from mother to child, have led to a considerable decline in the rate of HIV infection in Cameroon. From 10.5 per cent in 2000, the rate dropped to 4.3 per cent in 2012, a decline of more than 50 per cent.

"Another genuine source of satisfaction for Cameroon is the progress made in the area of education. The Government has strived to continue and strengthen the numerous efforts to ensure primary education for all Cameroonians. I would underscore that the national target is to provide to all children — boys and girls — throughout Cameroon, the resources to achieve a complete primary schooling cycle. The implementation of the sectoral strategy on education has led to clear progress in the implementation of the education policy. I can mention, among other things, the expansion of school infrastructure, the improvement in the teacher-student ratio, the reduction in the number of students who repeat a school year and the improvement of girls' education. The result of those actions is that the Cameroon today has one of the highest literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with an enrolment rate of nearly 100 per cent.

"But the same progress has not been achieved with respect to the targets of the other Goals. That is the case for most developing countries, including Cameroon. Hence the need to further our thinking that began in Rio de Janeiro in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and, as the President wished, to set the stage for the post-MDG development agenda. That thinking should be based on a clear assessment of the challenges encountered and lessons learned in the implementation of the

MDGs in order to consider the prospects for the future international framework.

"The full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals faces structural difficulties for some and temporary difficulties for others. They include climate change, the financial crisis and food insecurity. Those difficulties raise a number of important questions about how the MDGs were formulated. Were we too ambitious? Was the 2015 deadline realistic? Would an effective follow-up and support mechanism for States not have been necessary? Did we give ourselves adequate resources to ensure implementation? Clearly, Millennium Development Goal 8 — 'develop a global partnership for development' — was the beginning of an answer to the last point. However, that Goal will also be difficult to achieve by 2015.

"All the MDGs will probably not all be achieved by 2015. We should, however, acknowledge that the programme will enable the achievement of clear progress in many areas. It has allowed us to convey the very complex language of development in clear objectives accessible to all and enabled every one to articulate simple requirements and needs to their Government. We should safeguard those achievements in framework of the post-2015 agenda.

"The post-2015 agenda should also take into account the viewpoint of developing countries, which are the primary targets. In that regard, I congratulate the United Nations for having initiated a broad and inclusive process of consultations to garner the views of all, in particular those of academics and civil society organizations, with respect to the MDGs and the framework that will follow them. Consultations of that kind have been held in Cameroon. They have enabled civil society to issue recommendations for the post-MDG framework. Those recommendations are in keeping with the MDGs in terms of strengthening the actions to undertake in order to provide universal access to primary education, to reduce maternal and infant mortality and to improve access to water and sanitation.

"Furthermore, in the context of the next programme, my country believes that particular focus should be placed on creating decent jobs as an engine of economic growth and sustainable development. It is in that context that, in 2010, Cameroon crafted a strategy document for growth and employment. That document is part of Cameroon's shared development vision to 2035, through which the economic performance of my country will lead to concrete results in terms of creating jobs, reducing poverty and significantly improving the living conditions of our people, especially for women and youth.

"While the creation of decent jobs should, according to Cameroon, occupy a central position, environmental issues should not be neglected. In accordance with the spirit of Rio de Janeiro, those issues will make it possible to determine the future we want for humankind and to work seriously to bring it about.

"To ensure that new development goals will be achieved by the established deadline, coherent national initiatives must be supported by an effective global partnership. Therefore, in addition to the provisions that may be taken at the international level by donors — increased pledges, concessional loans, debt swaps, debt restructuring and debt cancellation — and at the national level by developing countries, it is crucial that control be better maintained over the financial and raw materials markets in order to enable countries to better withstand external shocks.

"We should also consider the possibility of setting up a support fund for implementing the new development programme, as well as regular follow-up mechanisms at the international and regional levels for achieving each goal.

"Beyond the difficulties I have already noted, the MDGs, like the future international development framework, can be optimally achieved only if an appropriate security environment is ensured. Unfortunately, developing countries, and Africa in particular, continue to be a stage for many conflicts.

"The situation in the Central African Republic, that in the eastern part of the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo and the turmoil following the crises of the Arab Spring in North Africa are all sources of concern that could jeopardize the development efforts undertaken by the States involved. With respect to the political, security and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic

in particular, which has reached proportions unprecedented in the history of that country, Cameroon and other States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) have shouldered their responsibilities by sending troops to Bangui to stabilize the situation. Similarly, we have actively contributed to the establishment of a road map that should enable them to restore normal constitutional order within 18 to 24 months.

"Cameroon calls on the international community to support the efforts of the Central African subregion, in particular in order to quickly operationalize the international support mission for the Central African Republic and to mobilize humanitarian assistance commensurate with the problems the country faces.

"Those political, security and humanitarian crises are compounded by recurrent acts of banditry, such as abductions of civilians and maritime piracy. The development of the latter criminal activity, which poses a threat to international trade, has reached alarming proportions. According to the International Maritime Bureau, the number of acts of piracy identified along the coast of West Africa in 2012 exceeded for the first time the number of attacks in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

"To deal with that problem, Yaounde, Cameroon's capital, hosted on 24 and 25 June, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2039 (2012), of 29 February 2012, a joint summit of the Economic Community of Central Africa States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea (GGC) on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. This was aimed at combatting piracy, armed robbery and other illegal activities perpetrated in the maritime space of the Gulf of Guinea.

"The Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, ECOWAS and the CGG, meeting together for the first time since the establishment of those three institutions, decided to set up an interregional coordination centre to monitor anti-piracy efforts in their common maritime space and to pool their resources. The headquarters of the centre, whose purpose is to implement a regional strategy to combat piracy, armed robbery and other illicit acts in the Gulf of Guinea, was given to Cameroon. Everything is being done to make it operational as quickly as possible. I would here like to commend the assessment of the results of the summit by the United Nations and other strategic partners and their commitment to support the implementation of the resolutions Yaounde meeting.

"As I pointed out on the occasion of the summit, in order to achieve the desired security objective, it will be necessary for all stakeholders to fully assume their role in the effective implementation of the instruments that the three organizations have put in place. As with the MDGs, the support of all of our strategic partners is crucial to effectively fight against piracy and other forms of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

"Anything that will promote the development of the region will contribute to improving global growth and security and represent significant progress towards 'The future we want' — a future of peace and prosperity for all."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Eide (Norway): We are living in times of rapid change. Global and regional dynamics are transforming global governance. A changing world will inevitably change the United Nations. But we, the Members of this great Organization, can influence the direction of the change. In order to do so, however, we must set strategic priorities. We should develop an agile multilateral system for the twenty-first century.

The architects of the United Nations were in many ways ahead of their time. The Charter, in its Chapters VI and VIII, foresaw a world where the United Nations should safeguard international peace and security, the settlement of disputes and the promotion of common interests at the regional, as much as at the global, level. By 1945, however, there were few established regional mechanisms. In other words, the Charter's provisions for regional arrangements were largely aspirational.

In today's world, regional organizations and arrangements are increasingly proving their relevance. Economic, social and political integration is taking place at the regional level. Cooperation is not only about outcomes, but also about processes. Practical cooperation can lay the foundation for strategic trust and shared values.

It was only after the past century's two horrific wars that my own continent chose close integration. That was instrumental in the creation of a peaceful Europe. For that historic achievement, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo last year.

The African Union (AU) has seen its continent through 50 transformative years. Freedom came at a high price. Yet, Africa has never been more prosperous than it is today. We see economic growth, improving governance and enhanced regional cooperation.

From Somalia to Mali, the African Union and its subregional partners continue to prove their relevance. The African Union is, beyond doubt, becoming one of the United Nations most important regional partners. I commend the AU for its dedicated efforts, and I want to express my deepest condolences for the tragic loss of life in the heinous terrorist attacks in Nairobi. We must never allow terrorists to set the agenda. Hence our efforts to work with the AU to promote peace and stability in Somalia at this crucial moment must be redoubled.

In recent years, Norway has worked with the people of Colombia to lay the foundations for lasting peace between its Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia movement. In doing so, we have seen the strong commitment of Colombia's neighbours. There, as everywhere else, we have learned that peace cannot just be established within one country alone; it has to be rooted in a regional context.

In South-East Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is becoming the source, as well as an architect, of regional stability. I commend ASEAN for its constructive role in supporting the democratic reform process in Myanmar. Myanmar will even preside over ASEAN next year, which in many ways is a testimony to the organization's adaptability.

Organizations such as ASEAN have also taken upon themselves the development of multilateral responses to regional challenges, including those pertaining to maritime security. Those strides are not only of regional importance, but are important to us all. The freedom and safety of the seas is one of the most important public goods in an interconnected world.

Just like in South-East Asia, Norway and our fellow Arctic States have built our deepened maritime cooperation on one of the most salient organizing principles of the United Nations — the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. And regions reach out to each other. Earlier this year, Norway acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. Likewise, again during the spring, China, Japan, India, the Republic of Korea and Singapore all joined the Arctic Council as observers. In doing so, they subscribed to the founding principles of the Arctic Council, principles that, yet again, are a direct reflection of a key a United Nations norm.

Where I live, we observe global warming at close quarters. As the polar ice cap melts, we are reminded of our shared responsibility for saving the planet's climate. Today, the Arctic Ocean is opening up to human activities in ways hard to imagine only a few years ago. Over the past decade, we have strived to develop forward-looking strategies for the safe management of the new maritime crossroads between Asia, Europe and North America.

The emergence of regional institutions as a feature of global governance is in fact good news for the United Nations. We need a United Nations that can be a catalyst that supports and encourages regional developments, which — and as long as — they reinforce our common global and multilateral agenda. We must acknowledge that trend. We must revisit the Charter of the United Nations, in particular its Chapters VI and VIII, and seek to identify the opportunities and potential pitfalls it represents for the United Nations.

The Middle East has yet to find an effective regional architecture. It is also a part of the world that is causing considerable concern these days. Israel and Palestine are facing a moment of truth. This month marks 20 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords. We have witnessed positive achievements on the ground. State institutions have been built and are ready for statehood. But for many years, a political horizon has been missing. Time is running out for a negotiated two-State solution.

But now, as Palestinian and Israeli leaders have returned to negotiations, hope is renewed. This afternoon, in the Conference Building, I presided over a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, the international donor group for Palestine. The donors reaffirmed their commitment to providing necessary assistance to the Palestinian Authority through the current transition to statehood.

This may be the last chance — a chance we cannot afford to miss.

As we speak the horrors in Syria are continuing. Thousands upon thousands of children, women and men are being killed and maimed. Millions are fleeing their homes. The use of chemical weapons is utterly unacceptable and is a grave violation of international law. Their further use must be effectively prevented. Those responsible must be brought to justice and the case referred to the International Criminal Court.

The Syrian crisis as such can be resolved only through a political solution. The Security Council must now live up to the responsibility that we, the Members of the United Nations, have entrusted in it. We must seize the momentum created by the United States-Russian agreement. Humanitarian access must be ensured by all parties and to all areas. The bloodshed in Syria must come to an end.

Frustrated by Syria, many have criticized the United Nations for its inability to act. However, we should not lose sight of the United Nations many achievements. Every single day, the United Nations provides shelter for refugees, vaccinates children, promotes maternal health and stabilizes fragile States. Evolving norms of human security have placed new issues on the agenda. Children and armed conflict, women, peace and security and the protection of civilians are recent examples of the important normative role of the United Nations.

Faced with a scarcity of resources accentuated by a global economy under pressure, we should increase, not decrease, the flexibility of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General to run the Organization. In autumn of 2012, the Assembly decided that the 2014-2015 budget should be cut by $100 million. Reducing the budget while increasing the number of tasks is a recipe for a weaker, not a stronger, United Nations. The Assembly must be coherent in its policies. The role of the Assembly should be to provide guidance, not to micromanage.

In conclusion, to meet the regional and global challenges of our time, we, the Member States, must work together to fulfil the aspirations and potential of the Charter of the United Nations. The efficiency of this great Organization depends upon its ability to innovate and to adapt to changing circumstances.

The meeting rose at 9.35 p.m.